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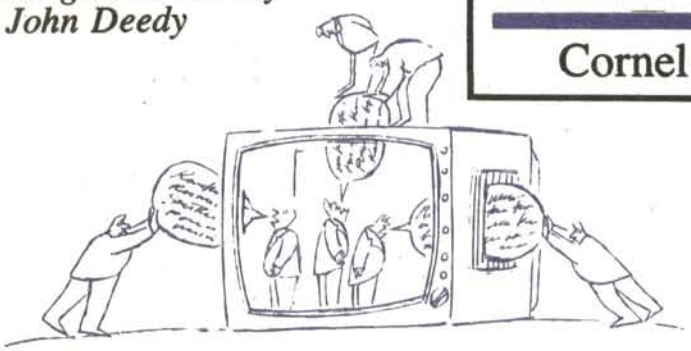

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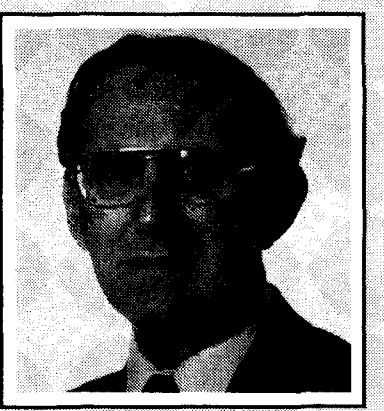

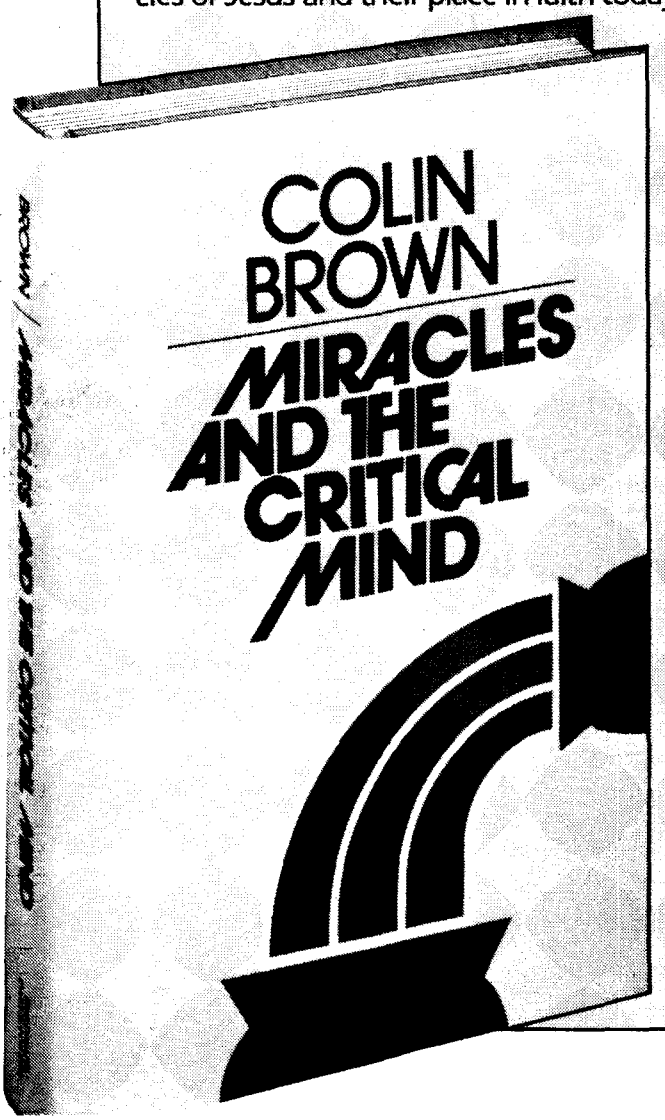

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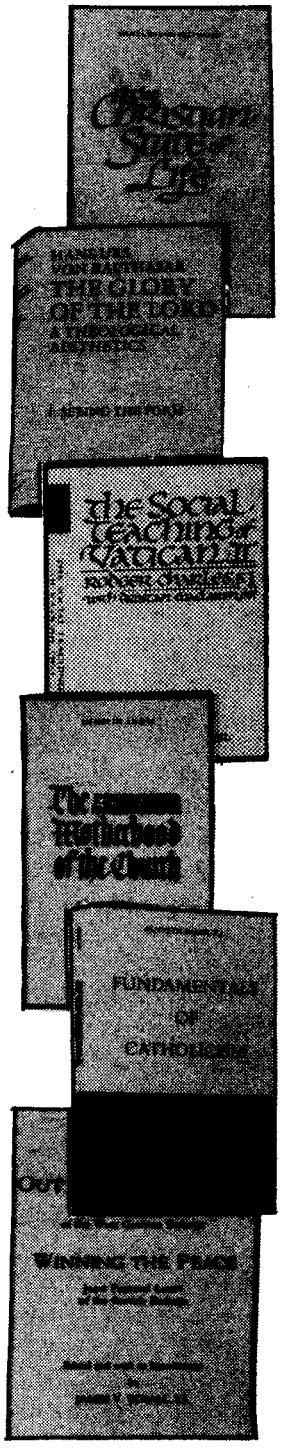
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Correspondence

Gospel, oral & written

Kansas City,Mo.

To the Editors: In a flippantly titled review of *The Oral and the Written Gospel* by Werner H. Kelber, ("Oral Surgery," Oct. 21), Father Raymond E. Brown makes several statements that suggest that he does not understand the central argument of Kelber's book. Father Brown refers to "the social context inherent in oral communication where speakers addressed audiences" and to "preaching adapted to the needs of audiences." But Kelber is clearly drawing on the work of Eric A. Havelock and Walter J. Ong, and what they and he mean to call attention to is an entire mentality, a mentality which differs from the literate mentality as radically as perceptual thought differs from conceptual thought.

Kelber's central argument is two-fold. On the one hand, he claims that the Gospels are the product of the oral mentality. Drawing on the work of Albert B. Lord, Ong, and others, he notes that primary oral people think and express themselves in patterned ways, and, especially in chapter two, he shows that certain oral patterns of composition can be discerned in the Gospel of Mark. In other words, the Gospel is a transcription of oral thought. On the other hand, Kelber argues that the written Gospel is somewhat different in orientation from the oral Gospel as Mark experienced the latter at the time. Specifically the oral sense of life (presence) is absent from the written word. This is good, for the power of spoken words can engender misleading impressions, especially in an oral culture. Kelber suggests that Mark actually attained a deeper understanding of the Gospel by writing it. He is saying that Mark in effect moved from an enchantment with the power and sound of the words to a grasp of their real or full meaning by writing the Gospel.

Now, Father Brown says, "it is surely true that writing narrows the more fluid options of speech." This statement suggests to me that he has missed Kelber's point. The options for expression in a primary oral culture are patterned. Even in writing, Mark followed oral options. Whether or not writing narrowed those options is not the issue. The issue is related to the difference between illusion and reality — or more precisely, the difference between talking enthusiastically about living in the Kingdom and actually fully living in the Kingdom.

When Father Brown says, "I believe that Kelber presses this too dialectically", I am inclined to disagree, but I know what he means. However, I do not know what he means by his next statement: "He underestimates the accountability of the written Gospel read to its first, intended audience." When the written Gospel was read aloud to primary oral people, it presumably became subject again to possible enthusiasm and enchantment. If anything, Kelber overestimates the potential of the written Gospel to protect hearers from this possibility, and so Father Brown's statement baffles me.

(REV.) THOMAS J. FARRELL, S.J.
Rockhurst College

The author replies:

In reply to Father Thomas Farrell's letter, I judge that the main issue is one of disagreement, not of my misunderstanding. In reviewing Kelber, I stated that he had drawn on the important work of Ong, but I do not think that such an analysis of oral culture can be applied to the Christian situation before Mark without more adaptation than Kelber made. To support his analysis of the pre-Marcan situation as primarily oral, Kelber made highly dubious appeal to rural situation, wandering prophets, and analogies in the apocryphal gospels. I do not think that he has given enough weight to the modifying influence of the tradition of written Scriptures in Israel and to fixed apostolic traditions. I would argue for greater continuity between the pre-Marcan oral situation and that produced by the written Gospel, whence my statement about accountability. I cannot accept Father Farrell's appeal to the difference between illusion and reality. I had no responsibility for the title of the review which Farrell deems flippant. But I am moved to wonder whether his letter means that he is content intellectually or religiously with Kelber's portrayal of Mark as a polemic against the reputation of some of the best known disciples of Jesus. If so, then let me be flippant by quoting a reaction associated with a more famous Brown: "Good grief!"

(REV.) RAYMOND E. BROWN, S.S.

Echoes of Eco

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: John Ahern overstates the case, in his enjoyable insider's tour of Umberto Eco's unlikely bestseller, *The Name of the Rose* (Nov. 4), when he tells your readers that "so little of [Eco's] other work is available in English." Humanities Press published one of those volumes of "Barthes-like" cultural essays in 1975. Indiana University Press has published two of Eco's studies in semiotics, with another on the way; Minnesota will be publishing Eco's *Signs* in the near future. That makes three books in print and two to come: not justice, perhaps, but hardly a symptom of neglect in this country, either.

There are other aspects of Professor Ahern's review that I find puzzling. Clearly he likes the novel, finds it "multi-layered" (which it is), and places it, fleetingly, in an Italian tradition dating from Manzoni. Why, then, does he accuse Eco of patronizing his narrator, of didactic heavy-handedness, even of "elitism" (*that* chestnut, again)?

(Continued on page 126)

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THE FUTURE IN LEBANON

WAS PRESIDENT REAGAN'S decision to order the marines in Lebanon shifted to the naval ships offshore a wise move? At least it will ease the political pressure he has been feeling on this issue. There is little doubt about the reality of that pressure. According to two national polls conducted by ABC News some weeks ago, almost sixty percent of the American people wanted the marines out of Lebanon. In Congress, members just back from visits to their constituencies returned increasingly restive over administration policy, and not just Democrats either. GOP minority leader Robert H. Michel, while still trying to support his president, had been making it plain for weeks that Republicans too wanted some change. As for the Democrats, they apparently became convinced that Lebanon was a prime campaign issue, and they showed themselves determined to keep Mr. Reagan's feet to the fire as long as possible. Speaker Tip O'Neill was tireless in demanding speedy withdrawal, and front-runner Walter Mondale, after saying in an interview four days previously that the marines should not be withdrawn, changed his mind and added his voice to the Democratic chorus. In an effort to second-guess the eighteen-month authorization previously given for the marines' stay in Lebanon and unable to agree among themselves on any specific time limit, Democrats in the House concentrated on a resolution calling simply for the "prompt and orderly" withdrawal of the troops, only to table it after the Lebanese prime minister and his Cabinet resigned and new violence broke out. In the face of all this, the administration vigorously counterattacked repeatedly, but Republicans admitted privately that public support for White House policy in Lebanon was evaporating and that change of some kind would be forced on Mr. Reagan.

That change has now been ordered, but the question remains: where do we go from here? Whether total withdrawal would send the wrong message or not, a case can certainly be made that the marines should never have been sent to Lebanon in the first place. It may well be that troops from either of the superpowers are unsuited for international peace-keeping efforts. That point aside, our basic national problem in Lebanon arose because Mr. Reagan early on transformed the marine peace-keeping presence in Lebanon from something that was feasible into Mission Impossible. The American force was originally intended as a buffer between Israelis and Palestinians, and then as a police force to protect the refugee camps — both possible goals. However, Mr. Reagan then authorized naval and air intervention into the internal Lebanese fighting, and overnight the U.S. role changed from peace-keeper to belligerent. It is understandable that the U.S. should have wanted to prop up the weak, pro-Western government in Lebanon; heaven knows we support far worse regimes elsewhere. Unfortunately, in the eyes of the Lebanese participants President Amin Gemayel has been unable to shed his image as little more than the head of one faction, as recent events have made painfully clear. When the U.S. intervened

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with force of arms on his behalf, it lost its protective cloak of neutrality. It was then that death started to come to the marines, culminating in the terrible terrorist attack that had such a devastating — and understandable — effect on American public opinion.

In one sense this is all ancient history now, and some would argue that we must put it behind us. But this cannot be; in order to decide where to go, the nation must look squarely at how we got into our present plight. President Reagan's decision to pull the marines back to the ships offshore may temporarily allay public anxiety and even still the Democratic fervor. At the same time, however, he has insisted that the removal of the marines from Beirut "will strengthen our ability to do the job we set out to do." Since a majority of the American people, to say nothing of the Democrats in Congress, seem unpersuaded of the wisdom of what "we set out to do," this can lead only to further division. As the respected Congressman Paul Simon of Illinois commented, foreign policy cannot be conducted on the basis of day-to-day public opinion polls. Nonetheless, over the long haul broad popular support for national foreign policy is essential. In withdrawing the marines Mr. Reagan made it clear that the United States would continue its policies of military pressure on the Soviet Union's client, Syria. With the marines out of the way, Washington sources say such pressure would take the form of vastly increased naval shelling and aerial bombardment from the United States fleet offshore. Such shelling and air attacks would be directed not only at the limited areas previously hit but at Syrian-controlled forces anywhere in Lebanon, always with the danger of dragging into the fray our ally Israel with the real possibility of a new Middle Eastern war. Even worse, with seven thousand Soviet advisers in Syrian territory, there is a real danger of a head-on confrontation between Russia and the United States. In short, the possibilities of not only a regional but a world confrontation stemming from our Lebanon policy are all too real.

What to do? A Republican congressional countermove to the Democratic resolution on the withdrawal of the marines called on the president instead "to explore other avenues" for a Middle East settlement. This was surely good advice, and Mr. Reagan should follow it — not excluding the possibility of a Geneva-type conference with the USSR and Syria. It is plain that the country is deeply divided on our national course in Lebanon, and it is not even clear that the administration itself is of one mind; the Pentagon and the State Department do not see eye to eye on the issue. This means that Mr. Reagan should do two things immediately. The first is to seek a broad reassessment of our goals and policy in Lebanon, calling on the best minds available inside and outside Washington and the Republican party. This would be a good time to call on former secretaries of state for counsel. The emergence of a bipartisan national consensus on this issue would be difficult, but it is not totally impossible, and the efforts can only be helpful. Certainly the administration can only profit from a serious effort at self-scrutiny on its policy on Lebanon and indeed on the entire Middle East. Secondly, once that top-level review has been concluded, it is essential that Washington's Great Communicator do what he has never done in any systematic way: go before the people, time after time if necessary, to argue the case for whatever Lebanese policy the administration decides on. Then a great national debate on the issue should take place, in Congress and in the nation. It is too late to undo the errors of the past, but we can at least try to avoid making worse ones in the future. The marines may be safer, but we are a long way from being out of the woods on Lebanon yet.

Washington report

POWER TO THE PREZ

LATEST SOLUTION TO THE DEFICIT

MORE POWER to the people? Yes, this can really take place. All they have to do is give more power to the president. And that, fellow Americans, can be accomplished very simply: just give the item veto power to Ronald Reagan.

So goes the theme underpinning Mr. Reagan's State of the Union proposal for a constitutional amendment that would grant him the executive power he exercised so fondly as governor: "Some forty-three of our fifty states grant their governors the right to veto individual items in appropriation bills without having to veto the entire bill," he said. "California is one of those forty-three states. As governor, I found this 'line-item veto' was a powerful tool against wasteful and extravagant spending. It works in forty-three states —let's put it to work in Washington, D.C., for all the people."

This was not the first time Mr. Reagan recalled nostalgically his budget powers as California governor. As early as October 16, 1981, reminiscing over his California experience, he asked visiting news editors, "You . . . wouldn't like to start an editorial campaign to give the president the right of line-item veto, would you?"

A number of them finally responded to his appeal, not the least helpful being the *Wall Street Journal*, which, in a September 14, 1983, editorial, declared, "Mr. Reagan should make the line-item veto the centerpiece of his reelection campaign, and he shouldn't flinch from claiming it as the Republican answer to the deficit issue."

The president seems to have taken this advice with the apparent goal of shifting the campaign debate over the unprecedented deficits from the substance of the problem to proposals for different ways of dealing with it. But he certainly should flinch if the item veto is being portrayed as the answer to the nation's deficits.

The deficit's threats to the economy have to be addressed now, not several years later when a constitutional amendment might finally be adopted. According to reports, this was pointed out to the president and he was offered the alternative of asking for increased power to rescind appropriations once

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they have been made. This was thought by the Justice Department to be a course that would ultimately be held constitutional. Mr. Reagan said "no" to the statutory approach and his aides' advice, and proposed his item veto amendment because, as recounted by the *Washington Post,* he felt it to be a "stronger election-year symbol of his resolve to cut the federal budget" and he was familiar with the device as governor.

But even if the president had been given the item veto power this year by some spectacular surge that swept the Congress and all the states necessary to adopt an amendment to the Constitution, Mr. Reagan would find little help from his new authority in reducing the deficit. The item veto cannot touch the enormous sums provided in the budget for entitlements since eligible recipients can sue the government for their payments. And if one also puts aside the monies allocated to pay the interest on the debt, the president has recourse only to cutting defense appropriations and foreign assistance, especially military aid — which is not likely — or to cutting domestic, nondefense discretionary programs, which amount to only nine percent of the budget. As observed by Senate Republican Appropriations Chairman Mark Hatfield, "The president could veto each line-item in every appropriation bill and still end up with a deficit of well over $100 billion per year."

When President Eisenhower submitted his proposal for an item veto amendment to House Speaker Sam Rayburn in 1957, seventy percent or more of the budget was discretionary; today, it is less than fifteen percent of the budget. The item veto may very well be an appropriate election-year symbol of Mr. Reagan's resolve to cut the federal budget, one that he might not totally appreciate, for he should be flinching all the way to the voting booth.

As he has on many other occasions, Mr. Reagan appears to rely heavily on his experience as governor in assessing national problems. At an October 17, 1981, press conference, the day after his appeal to the news editors, the president replied to a question on the item veto by detailing the workings of California's budget. After recalling that he suggested his state's system of line-item veto to a disbelieving Speaker O'Neill "when I first came here," Mr. Reagan said, "Now, why couldn't such a system of that kind at the federal level be just as effective as it is at the state level? After all, the state of California is ten percent of the population."

Over and above the utter horror that might seize some natives of Manhattan or Kansas City at the thought that the experience of California might be applicable to them, Mr. Reagan, in citing successful state use of the item veto, appears to equate gubernatorial power with presidential and to call upon Congress to pattern itself after state legislatures. Just noting the present level of federal discretionary spending, the analogy begins to fail. Unlike Congress, many state legislatures meet irregularly, some as little as a few months every two years. Frequently the governor is the only consistent presence for the operation and oversight of state programs.

State use of the item veto varies as much as the differing political cultures of each state: the Illinois governor's reduction of a line item becomes law unless overriden by the legislature; a court suit has held that Indiana's governor must veto a complete section and only in an appropriation bill. State mechanisms also differ widely as to the governor's veto power over language accompanying appropriations and as to the manner in which vetoes may be overridden.

And even when one takes a look at that state experience, it is hardly a flawless record. In response to the argument that the item veto would expedite appropriations in order to give Congress time to consider vetoed items, the experience of California is quite enough. The House Budget Committee points out that in California the line-item veto presents a perennial problem with the legislature holding back on appropriations bills until a deal is struck with the governor on the use of his veto. Last year's confrontation between Governor Deukmejian and the Democratic-controlled legislature led to a federal court-ordered mailing of state welfare and salary checks even though the state was without a budget and the governor without authority to spend. This experience might give pause to those members of Congress who have cited the item veto as a solution to the confrontations with the president over threatened vetoes of continuing resolutions with their specter of federal government shutdowns.

In tracing the development of the item veto power from its innovation in the Confederacy in 1861 and the Reconstruction-era constitutions of Georgia and Texas, Professor Gerald Benjamin finds that thirty-six states had given their governors the item veto power within a half century of the Civil War. He concludes with the ironic observation that "at the very time that James Bryce and Woodrow Wilson were declaring Congress ascendant in Washington, constitutional changes in the states were empowering governors as never before in American history. . . The groundwork was being laid during this critical period for the twentieth-century reliance upon gubernatorial power as the center of energy in state political systems."

The tension between the powers of the president and the

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powers of Congress is the center of energy for our present federal system, as envisioned by the Founding Fathers. Benjamin Franklin's argument at the 1787 Constitutional Convention against the absolute veto — "No good law whatever could be passed without a private bargain with him [the governor of Pennsylvania]" — would apply with equal force to the item veto. Each member of Congress would be required to bargain with the president to obtain local appropriations. Pork-barrel would still exist in appropriations, but it would be at the president's acquiescence and to his advantage.

In arguing for the item veto, the *Wall Street Journal* states that while Congress "represents diverse interests of 435 districts and various coalitions," the president "represents a national constituency." Yet Mr. Reagan's upcoming campaign, as with that of every president, is predicated on rebuilding and maintaining an election coalition that has been nurtured throughout his term. Any item veto authority would be well used to foster that electoral constituency, and, in the case of Mr. Reagan, that "national constituency" is not likely to include many blacks or poor. So whose line items are more apt to be struck?

It is naive, at best, to think that the administration's budget decisions are predicated consistently upon the national interest without taking special political interests into account. The president and his administration are under political pressures, just as is the Congress. The point was well made by Massachusetts Representative Barney Frank, who was reported to have said, as he held up the deficit-laden FY 1985 Budget which the president himself had submitted to Congress: "The president has all the authority he needs to veto anything in here."

JEREMIAH BARUCH

(Jeremiah Baruch is the pseudonym of a Washington writer with a position in government.)

Election '84

CHERCHEZ LA FEMME

THE DEMOCRATIC DEBATES I

BY NOW EVERYONE sees it: the gender gap in American politics. Women and men show little difference on so-called traditional women's issues like day care, the Equal Rights Amendment, and equal pay; but move to other areas — arms control and defense, the environment, the delivery of social services, abortion included— and a significant difference begins to display itself in male/female perceptions and attitudes. A *New York Times*/CBS poll in December, for instance, had men approving of President Reagan's positions by 57 to 32 percent, but this approval narrowed to 43 to 37 percent among women. Mr. Reagan's own pollster, Richard Wirthlin, documents a gender gap. He has the president's approval rating among women lagging a full nine points behind that of men.

Possessing definite political instincts and opinions, and comprising 53.5 percent of the electorate, women have the potential to teach the two major political parties a costly lesson or two. So what better idea than to use this newly discovered strength, and arrange that the presidential candidates debate issues of particular interest to women and in a context determined not by men strategists but by women themselves? This is precisely what happened recently at Emmanuel College in Boston. Under the cosponsorship of Emmanuel and Women in Politics '84, a nonpartisan coalition of individuals and women's organizations formed to maximize women's participation in electoral politics, six Democratic presidential candidates were brought together to debate the gender gap. Never before had a presidential-candidates' debate been devoted exclusively to the subject.

In so many ways the setting was as auspicious as the debate itself. Emmanuel College is an institution which in the early 1970s made a risky but conscious decision not to join the trend of women's colleges to go coeducational. Instead it committed itself to the education of women, and took on a whole new feminist image. Shed was the stereotype of a Catholic women's college which existed primarily to train young ladies to be good teachers and good housewives for young men coming off the campuses of Boston College in nearby Newton Heights and Holy Cross College in Worcester, forty miles west; a college where, as the the *New York Times* recalled, Cardinal Cushing could stand up some twenty-five years ago and tell Emmanuel students: "Aspire to the Heights, and if you don't reach the Heights, remember there is always the Cross."

Cushing would be run off campus for any such whimsical comment today, and maybe by Emmanuel's president, Sister Janet Eisner, SND, who appears more given to quoting Abigail McCarthy than archbishops of Boston. Twice — at a press briefing and before TV cameras in welcoming remarks — she cited McCarthy's observation in a *Commonweal* column that "almost half the women in the House of Representatives, one of the two women Cabinet members, and many state and local office holders" come from all-women's colleges such as Emmanuel.

Not surprisingly, the six Democratic presidential candidates who showed for the debate — Mondale, Glenn, Hart, Hollings, McGovern and Jackson — strove to surpass one another in being supportive and sympathetic to women's concerns on everything from pay equity to military spending, the national budget, human services, unemployment, inflation, child care, equal rights, civil rights, foreign policy. Most bases were touched — six times. In sum, the convergence was on women as a liberated, unassailable species. It was left to George McGovern, the original pro-feminist among the pack, to speak up for women as homemakers (scattered applause) and to chide women for expecting high office when not enough are even trying for office at the grass roots (silence). Glenn concurred on the homemakers point, but only in passing; it was not a night to chance comparisons to Cushing.

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Given the locale of a Catholic campus, some thought that abortion would be the touchiest topic of the evening. It wasn't. One reason was that the question period was briefer than planned, and managed rather than open. Another was that the panel of questioners — Ellen Goodman of the *Boston Globe*, Eileen Shanahan of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and Carole Simpson of ABC News — chose not to press the subject. The candidates appeared before the panelists in sets of threes, and Shanahan did ask Jackson, Hollings, and Mondale for their positions on sex education, including contraceptive information, and public funding for abortion. The one Democratic candidate whose presence might have provided a point of dissent, former Governor Reubin O. Askew, of Florida, was elsewhere.

As with previous debates between the candidates, there was no clear winner of the gender-gap debate, probably because the evening developed as more of a love feast than a debate. So of course there was no clear loser either. Everyone came away with something. Jesse Jackson won the charisma award hands down. He had it from the minute he entered the hall and bounded up the stairs throwing kisses to the applause. As agile and graceful as a Sugar Ray Leonard, he seemed ready to shadow box in other than the figurative sense. John Glenn won the celebrity cup, attracting a trail of adoring groupies and most of the portable TV cameras and microphones. Hart won the good-humor prize for his wit in handling a rather silly question about whom he would consult if a crisis came up at one o'clock in the morning. Would he turn around to a man or a woman? Given the hour, said Hart to laughter, it would probably be Lee, meaning his wife. Hollings was smooth; McGovern, characteristically candid; Mondale, arch and maybe a mite cautious. With his big lead over the others for the Democratic nomination, for him it is now a game of playing one's cards safely.

Still, if the debate produced no clear-cut winner, the evening did. It was women and the women's movement as a force in American politics. As *Boston Globe* columnist Robert Turner observed, it does not necessarily follow that presidential politics in 1984 is going to develop as some kind of latter-day Thurberesque battle of the sexes, but it does mean that women are being talked to and listened to in ways that are very new. The Emmanuel forum clinches that point, while at the same time establishing a bigger challenge: getting Ronald Reagan to debate gender-gap issues between now and November 6. The odds on that are not good.

JOHN DEEDY

(John Deedy, former managing editor of Commonweal, *writes from a converted barn on Cape Ann.)*

Report from Venezuela

SUBVERSION, IMF-STYLE

WHY LET IT BE A FRONT FOR THE BANKS?

DETRACTORS OF the International Monetary Fund (IMF) claim that the stringent conditions it imposes on third-world borrowing nations force their poor and middle-class populations to make sacrifices so that their governments can meet obligations to foreign private banks. The IMF's defenders respond that the fund's recommendations are aimed at guaranteeing its own loans which represent an appreciable percentage of all international lending. These differences in viewpoint raise the question of whether the IMF acts to safeguard its own investments only or those of the commercial banks as well.

The tie-in between the IMF and the private banks is apparent in the conditions that it attaches to emergency loans which, when granted, represent a tacit endorsement of the nation's economic policies. This "seal of approval" facilitates (and in some cases is a *sine qua non* for) renegotiation with the commercial banks. The IMF's plans for economic recovery coincide with what the banks themselves would put forward if given the opportunity. In this sense the IMF either consciously or unwittingly represents the interests of the private sector in spite of the fund's public character and its theoretical commitment to the well-being of its constituent nations.

Of course, the private banks themselves could draw up and impose their own set of conditions, but they would not be as morally binding as those of a public institution like the IMF. Chase Manhattan and its ilk would become convenient targets of nationalist feeling should they, rather than the IMF, make such unpopular recommendations as elimination of the government's milk subsidy and the freezing of salaries for public employees.

The case of Venezuela — more than those of its heavily indebted Latin American neighbors — demonstrates the importance of receiving the IMF's "seal of approval" and how, in practice, the fund acts as a virtual agent of the private banks. Venezuela's uniqueness lies in its relative economic stability which is underpinned by an exceptionally high per capita revenue derived from oil exports. While other nations desperately negotiate with the IMF for short-term loans to provide them with precious breathing space, Venezuela's main interest

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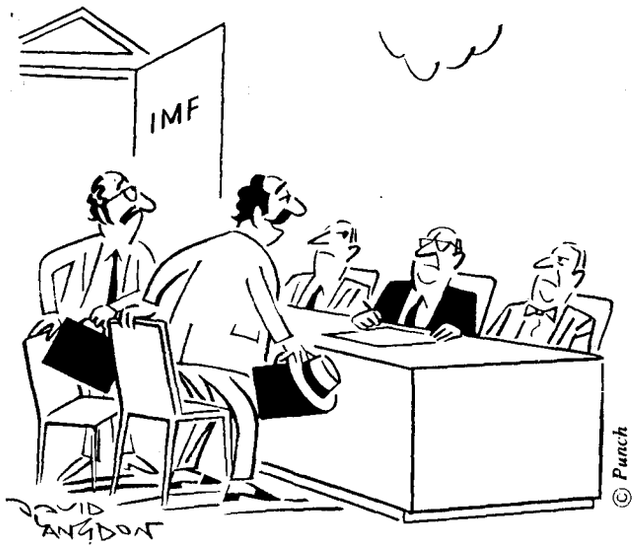

"Any chance of cab fare back to our hotel ?"

is the IMF's "seal of approval" which will help it come to terms with its private creditors. The rescheduling of its debt will enable Venezuela to make its required payments to the private banks on time, something that Brazil and Argentina cannot hope to accomplish at the present. Thus Venezuela's experience in solving its debt problems is similar to what other nations will be passing through once they begin to achieve economic recovery.

Venezuela's sound position should allow it to obtain the relatively modest loans it is soliciting from the IMF practically with no strings attached. Nevertheless, the IMF has submitted Venezuela to lengthy negotiations in order to reach a formal agreement regarding the nation's future economic policies. The resultant "seal of approval" will serve as a green light for the four-hundred-and-fifty-odd commercial banks which are rescheduling the nation's foreign debt.

Some of the IMF's recommendations are more a reflection of the conservative thinking of private banks than part of a strategy for repaying loans. Thus, for instance, the fund has called on Venezuela to implement a sales tax which conservatives in the U.S. and elsewhere hold in such high regard. Such a measure, however, would be unnecessary if an income tax reform — as advocated by the nation's main middle-of-the-road labor confederations — were implemented in which loopholes were tightened up and the virtually untaxed upper-income groups forced to pay a greater share.

The wealthy classes are not the only vested interests which are exempt from making sacrifices in the IMF strategy. It may be asked, for instance, why the IMF does not question Venezuela's acquisition of the costly F-16 bombers which will allow the nation's air force to boast of having the most sophisticated planes anywhere in the continent (see "F-16s for Caracas" in *Commonweal*, March 26, 1982).

The IMF's policies — if accepted by recently elected Venezuelan President Jaime Lusinchi — will provoke a popular outcry. This opposition is in itself nothing new to the IMF which throughout its history has frequently triggered sharp controversies in third-world nations. Such strife in the case of Venezuela, however, has particular relevance. Lusinchi, thanks to labor backing, won by an unexpectedly large percentage of votes which means that popular expectations are high. IMF recommendations for Venezuela come down hard on diverse sectors of the population which have direct input into the nation's highly participative democratic institutions. Thus the fund's proposals could set off conflict on many different fronts, and not just a few street riots as occurred in Brazil. While IMF policies run the risk of undermining the transition to democracy in Brazil and Argentina, it would be particularly unforgivable if they destabilize Venezuela, South Amrica's only well-established democracy.

Do the United States and the other advanced Western nations which control the IMF really want to identify themselves with IMF policies that threaten to galvanize social tensions? And why should the IMF act as a front for the commercial banks, and thus become a whipping boy of nationalist sentiment south of the border? Not since the days of Theodore Roosevelt, when U.S. marines were sent overseas to collect debts, have the state and the private sector been so inseparably identified. The recent public airing of the United States contribution to the IMF must now be complemented by a thorough examination of the policies that the fund is advocating and the interests which they represent. STEVE ELLNER

(Steve Ellner is an associate professor in the department of economics at the Universidad de Oriente, Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela.)

U.S. Steel & investments

LESSON IN LOYALTY

CHICAGOANS FEEL BETRAYED

WHEN U.S. Steel announced it was canceling plans to build a new rail mill at South Works in South Chicago on December 27, the company placed the blame on labor costs. In full-page ads in Chicago's daily newspaper, the giant conglomerate regretfully told how union refusal to change non-competitive work rules killed what was to have been America's most advanced facility for manufacturing rails.

But Chicagoans didn't buy it. U.S. Steel's move was greeted by angry denunciations from a solid phalanx of public officials. Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, got front-page headlines when he charged that the company had reneged on a "firm commitment" to build the mill.

That commitment went back to 1981, Rostenkowski explained, when U.S. Steel came to Congress seeking tax relief; leasing provisions in 1981 and 1982 gave the company "tons of money." "At that point," the congressman recounts, [the

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late Indiana Representative] "Adam Benjamin said to me, 'We'll go with the rail mill for Chicago now for sure.' I said to Adam, 'Have you got an understanding?' And he said, 'Absolutely.' "

When U.S. Steel bought Marathon Oil for $6 billion and then delayed building the rail mill, Rostenkowski flew to Pittsburgh where company officials reaffirmed their commitment. Its recent turnaround has left him angry. "They're going to come back to Rostenkowski [for tax legislation]. And Rostenkowski's going to be an awful, awful quiet man for a long time."

The congressman's anger was more than matched by local public officials. Back in 1982, U.S. Steel had claimed that it could not build the mill without substantial help from the city and state. Ever since, government officials have been falling all over themselves to give U.S.Steel what it said it needed. First, the state legislature repealed a sales tax on rails shipped from Illinois. Then, Illinois Attorney General Neil Hartigan proposed a $33 million subsidy to defray the corporation's costs of meeting court-ordered expenditures for water pollution equipment. Hartigan's proposal was topped by the city of Chicago's Commissioner of Economic Development, Robert Mier, who offered a $37 million low-interest loan. Last December 27, U.S. Steel spurned them all.

Attorney General Hartigan, who had grabbed the limelight in the effort to help U.S. Steel, didn't like being double-crossed. "We offered them a good deal," he said. "This whole thing doesn't make sense." And he vowed to force U.S. Steel to install the water pollution equipment at its own expense. Congressman Gus Savage added his own condemnation: "U.S. Steel would get one concession and go back for more, get one drop of blood and go back for another." And Commissioner Mier refused to accept the scapegoating of the union: "There's no way in the world we could second-guess the union's decisions," he said, noting that the company "basically asked the people to vote to give up their jobs . . . What was being asked of them was extraordinary."

The politicians' support did not assuage local unionists' anger. Don Stazak, president of United Steelworkers Local 65, was long known as a "company man." In the 1970s, he used to go through South Works gathering workers' signatures on petitions asking for import restrictions. The company paid for his time. When Stazak was elected president in 1982, he pushed hard to get local acceptance of the work rule concessions U.S. Steel demanded as the price of the rail mill. Although more militant members denounced him as a sell-out, and the concessions as a betrayal of union principle and a threat to safety, Stazak carried the day in a referendum vote.

Then in the spring of 1983, Stazak recalls, "Roderick told me, 'Don, if you can get anything done with Neil Hartigan as far as environmental relief, do it by all means.' And I got a call from Bill Miller, the vice president of labor relations, and he asked me to come to Pittsburgh so I went there and I met him and his lawyer, and they said to me, 'Don, if you can get this thing done, three months after you get it done, we'll start building our rail mill.' "

But for U.S. Steel, Local 65's concessions, and its political support, just weren't enough. In November 1983, the company demanded a new set of give-backs. Now management wanted the right to hire outside contractors to do maintenance work, while 300-500 Local 65 craftsmen were eliminated. And to take advantage of cheap electric rates on weekends and late at night, U.S. Steel insisted on the right to work employees ten hours per day and on weekends without paying premium rates. To top it off, incentive pay would be eliminated for most jobs, in violation of the industry's Basic Labor Agreement.

Not surprisingly, Donald Stazak feels betrayed. "I realize they're in the business to make money. But at the same time, we have to have some ethics and some loyalty. Time after time, the company has come to us and said, 'We give you good salaries and good conditions, how can people be so disloyal?' I come back to them now and say, 'Now where is your loyalty? What the hell are you doing?' They shake their head and say, 'It's above us.' "

"Blaming the union is a terrible insult to all who have tried so hard to meet the original demands of U.S. Steel," Stazak told Chicago's sympathetic media. "The proposals smacked of union-busting but we responded to them. If we had agreed to any, the consequences would have been so far-reaching, it would have destroyed our union, and others as well. They are looking to cut out the soft underbelly of the union and get us fighting among ourselves."

This is more than a story of corporate arrogance. U.S. Steel's decision not to build a technologically advanced rail mill in South Chicago symbolizes corporate America's flight from manufacturing. Without the South Works rail mill, American railroads will increase their purchases of imported rails, which already comprise forty percent of the market.

U.S.Steel's cancellation of the rail mill project was accompanied by an equally disturbing announcement: most of Chicago's great South Works will also be closed. Although the media persist in calling the mill an obsolete giant, just last year U.S. Steel had put $91 million into renovating a big blast furnace. Efficient basic oxygen furnaces, a good plate mill, and even a modern continuous caster will also go down.

The reason is simple. It's not because the rail market is saturated. It's not because South Works is inefficient. South Chicago's tragedy is that South Works is owned by U.S. Steel. The Marathon Oil purchase made U.S. Steel into an oil-based conglomerate with a steelmaking division. Until that conglomerate pays off the huge debt it built up on its venture into the oil business, it will have to cut back its investments in steel, whatever the long-term cost to the U.S. economy, or to the beleaguered steelworkers of South Chicago.

If Illinois politicians want to do something constructive with their anger, they'll push for federal intervention in the steel industry before it goes down the drain.

DAVID BENSMAN & ROBERTA LYNCH

(David Bensman and Roberta Lynch are writing a book about the decline of the steel industry in Chicago's Southeast side.)

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Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

DEBASING THE PROCESS

THE DEMOCRATIC DEBATES II

"GOBBLEDYGOOK!" shouted one aspiring leader of what we like to call the free world. "Baloney!" cried the other. The Democratic debate which diverted Americans on a Sunday afternoon without football is behind us now. I seem to be alone in remembering with dismay the low level of public discourse to which it fell, and alone, too, in being bothered by it at the time.

"Oh, that's what the public understands," said one person to whom I mentioned it. Is that fair to the public? "They have to talk like that," said another. But do they? And how well does it serve them? There was general agreement the next day that the debate hadn't changed anything. People for Mondale were people for Mondale. People for Glenn were for Glenn and so on. A good many people — mostly camera or print media people — thought that Ted Koppel, the moderator, looked more presidential than all the rest put together. "What a superb journalist that man is!" breathed commentator Bill Moyers.

Aye, and there's the rub. Never mind that the man who is in command has the advantage. No one seemed to note that Mr. Koppel contributed a great deal to the effect by his patronizing attitude toward the exercise itself and its participants. He introduced with a tired toilet joke worthy of Johnny Carson at his worst, and then did his best to prod the candidates into unpresidential behavior. Not that Mr. Koppel cannot be superbly solemn and respectful when he chooses. He was just that in conducting another panel some nights later. The subject then, however, was the current administration effort to control leaks by requiring lie-detector tests and requiring appointees to sign lifetime agreements to precensorship of anything they might write after leaving government. This discussion, since it touched journalistic sources, was undoubtedly closer to his heart and more serious to him than the choice of a potential president.

Mr. Koppel's polite cynicism about the political process and the men who have given their lives to public service, it is true, paled beside the aggressive bullying attitude of Phil Donahue whose pointless questioning brought about the tiff between Glenn and Mondale which so delighted the media. Ah, conflict at last! Ah, political drama! Manufactured rage and simulated high dudgeon was what it really was. Each of the front-runners was fully aware of the television realities and the television audience. Each felt it necessary to show that he was "stronger" and better than the other; each knew the precious value of air time (one could almost hear the admonitions of their media consultants), and was determined to have a large share if he could get it.

I would like to be clear that I respect both Mr. Mondale and Mr. Glenn. I will undoubtedly vote for either if nominated. Each has a good legislative record. Both have a better sense of the public problems we must deal with at home and abroad than does the present incumbent. But I feel strongly that in using such weak, slangy, and inappropriate words to characterize each other's programs for the nation they collaborated in the continuing, if perhaps unconscious efforts of the media stars to debase the political process. Political debate requires high seriousness at all times but especially in this, the nuclear age. It is not just another form of contest. There are levels of language suited to it. And there is a dignity of demeanor.

Admittedly the television format and the either-or framework set by talk show hosts trying to make their programs lively have most candidates in a trap. It is the conventional wisdom that it is the laid-back and cool personality who is successful on the little screen. It is also the conventional wisdom that eloquence which would stir a crowd will not work on the small screen. Remember, advise the consultants, television is one-to-one. You are in the viewer's living room. And then there is the hard fact that the candidates are dependent on exposure and highly aware of the need to provide the excitement producers crave. They dare not be dull. They must be genial and take all gibes in good humor.

Yet there *is* an eloquence which plays on TV. One can look to the southern preachers' style for it. Jesse Jackson was a perfect example that afternoon in January. (It was he who reminded his fellows that they must be serious.) Billy Graham has an eloquence and manner which plays well on television. And who can forget the ringing rhythms of Barbara Jordan at the last Democratic convention? Hers is the speech we remember. There are northerners, too, who have mastered TV — John F. Kennedy most prominent, perhaps, among them. Kennedy, too, is an example of the speaker who understood the levels of language. The high seriousness of his state addresses contrasted with the witty evasions with which he handled troublesome questions in the more relaxed format of press conferences. But the language he used in each was language appropriate to a president mindful of the dignity of his office.

John F. Kennedy could be exceedingly salty and monotonous in the use of epithets in private conversation, if we are to believe his friends' memoirs, but he never mixed the level of private discourse with that of public, whether formal or informal. Nor did Lyndon Johnson who was certainly given to language of the earth earthy. Nor did Harry Truman to whom the language of top sergeants and the stockyards was familiar. I have never heard that the private language of either Glenn or Mondale is as colorful as that of those mentioned here, but they have the same need to be aware of the level of language. Language is the tool of leaders and it must be mastered.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

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Therapeutic death

FRANCIS KANE

A FEW DECADES ago we experienced in our popular culture what has been called (perhaps a bit presumptuously) a "sexual revolution." What that revolution promised was a liberation from the repressive Victorian taboos and inhibitions that surrounded sexual activity. Following on its heels has come another similar revolution — this one in the area of death, dying, and grief. Like its predecessor, the death and dying revolution attempts to liberate us from the irrational fears and repressive anxieties that surround the experience of death. Death has been brought out of doors, chronicled, discussed, even experimented with and, above all (to use Philip Rieff's phrase) therapeutically managed. Again, much like the sexual liberation that led to sexual education, the death and dying movement has spawned its own *paidea*; death and dying courses and films, death and dying nurses, therapists, and specialists. And, like all disciplines seeking respectability, it coined its own nomenclature; "thanatology." Eros and now thanatos have been liberated from the last bastions of Victorian prudery and opened to the managerial expertise of the therapist.

Undoubtedly, some of this new enlightenment has been and continues to be beneficial. But liberation, however exhilarating, can involve needless violation and garish light thrown in dark places can overexpose — rather than reveal — reality. Serious questions and challenges (not just from conservatives) have been put to the aims, intention, goals, and motives of the sexual movement. Perhaps because it is a newer phenomenon, such serious scrutiny of the thanatology movement has not occurred, although it has started. Articles, like the July 1982 *Harper's* "Canoodling wit Death," have aimed at a previously sacrosanct figure like Kübler-Ross. Still, Ron Rosenbaum's critique in that article goes after the more obvious absurdities of the movement and leaves somewhat unchallenged its basic operative assumptions. It is in this area of underlying presuppositions (five in all) that I wish to bring to bear my analysis and, in so doing, I hope to shift the grounds of the argument. That debate — defined and, for the most part, won by the thanatology movement itself — has pitted the professional technicians and their interventionist assaults on death against the proponents of "death with dignity" and their more liberated and humanistic approach. Granting the relative superiority of the latter's position could, unfortunately, forestall any further questions about it. Yet certain questions do need to be posed, especially the age-old queries of any liberation — in whose name and for what end?

One of the methodological assumptions of the thanatology movement which would preempt any reflective critique is what might be termed its "emotivism" or anti-theoretical bias. "Get in touch with your feelings" seems to be a prime imperative for death care practitioners as well as for the dying themselves. Now the raising of so-called "gut level" feelings to sacrosanct heights is hardly new or surprising and bears little consideration—except that, practically speaking, it is so often effectively utilized by experts in the field who wish to deflect any possible criticism.

Thoughtful reservations about interventions and techniques of death and dying care are often met with a patient, benign, and paternalistic pat on the head that goes something like this: "Ah, but you're rationalizing again!" The young movement has learned its lesson well from its parent, the sexual awareness movement. Yet, one need not deny the importance of feelings — though one wonders in today's world why we need be admonished to get in touch with them — without making the equally important point that "pure" feelings do not even exist and, even if they did, they certainly would be inarticulate without a consciousness that mediates and gives them meaning. Rather, what we may well need to be admonished about is "to think what we are doing" — to use Hannah Arendt's insightful phrase — if for no other reason than it might eliminate a great deal of gut level flatulence.

What is it, then, that strikes us when we think what we do even when that doing, in the case of dying, is our own

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un-doing? It is an almost commonplace truth nowadays to assert that death is an event which we cannot control. That truth is in danger of being misunderstood or trivialized unless it is recognized that death is not just one event among others peculiar only in that, unlike most, it stands impervious to our efforts at control; but rather death, my own death, reveals that at the very heart of existence I am not in control.

We are, each of us, beings who have been thrust unwittingly into a world and who must quit that world whether we wish it or not. Death encroaches on us and compels us to admit our own finitude. Curiously enough, the death and dying movement seems to have little quarrel with an affirmation of the fragility of human existence; indeed, such an understanding is often utilized in their battles against the medical profession's often frenetic attempts to keep a patient alive at all costs. Nonetheless, there is a hint in the new practice of thanatology of a much more subtle but no less real effort at controlling death.

A particularly striking example of this new "will-to-control" is the activity usually described in the literature as "grief management." This notion, made popular by one of the guiding lights of the American Hospice movement, Marcia Lattanzi, certainly belies the old Shakespearean maxim: "Everyone can master a grief but he that has it." Instead the grief-stricken ones are now urged to "master" and "control" their grief, to "work through" the grieving process — the very words betraying a resolute if not desperate attempt to overcome our vulnerability. As one person, active in the movement, said about his own grief in tones of obvious self-congratulatory relish: "I was surprised how quickly I worked through it." Besides establishing a new battlefield for narcissistic self-enrichment (I will get to that later), such an attitude denies a fundamental truth about ourselves — that life exists not as a problem that needs solution but a mystery that continually thwarts our attempts even at understanding much less controlling it.

Grief, like any significant human experience, does have its pathological expression, but a criticism of that pathology would lie on grounds other than failure to "work it through." Indeed, what makes "grief management" itself almost pathological is its failure to suffer it through. To undergo grief, to let death be death — in its utter finality — would strike terror in our hearts, leaving us helpless and vulnerable. Yet, not unlike the sexologists who teach their clients how to manipulate their pleasures, the new thanatologists teach us how to get on top of and master our grief and dying.

Such self-conscious manipulation — this feverish anxiety by which we monitor our progress through the various stages — is but an ingenious device for distancing ourselves from the very reality we seek to confront. And since this splitting of the self into two — the grieving or dying self and the transcendent solicitous self watching over the process — is no mean trick, we need the help of experts who alone can show us how to get it right. Management is the goal of these experts, so it is no surprise that the final stage of the process is always "acceptance." But it is an acceptance cheaply purchased whose chief end seems to be the transformation of the patient into a tractable subject. "Infantilization" is the term Rosenbaum uses and he rightly notes it amounts to a subtle form of behavior control.

Transforming obstinate adults into docile, childlike patients certainly eases the burden of one's case load. An instructive contrast to these misplaced and hence ineffectual techniques of control might be the old blues singers who at least had the good sense to know that you cannot master, avoid, or dismiss life's troubles. You can only "sing the blues" — and that is not a technique for dealing with troubles but a way of suffering through them.

The attitude of the will-to-control leading, as it does, to the "infantilization" of death offers us a transition to the next presupposition of the movement — its narcissism or gospel of self-fulfillment. Certainly, infantilization implies narcissism for the will-to-control, which aims at self-mastery, easily fixates on the self. In his study of contemporary culture, Christopher Lasch nicely expresses the identity of the will-to-control and narcissism:

> The manager's view of the world . . . is that of the narcissist who sees the world as a mirror of himself and has no interest in external events except as they throw back a reflection of his own image (*The Culture of Narcissism*, p. 96).

Given the finality of death, however, it might seem that the thanatology and self-fulfillment movements would make strange bedfellows. But the leap from the "good" orgasm to the "good" death is not all that hard, as David Guttman has observed. (in Feifel, *New Meanings of Death*).

> Pop psychologists have reduced their productions of books on achieving the good orgasm; instead, they are now telling us how to compose an aesthetic decomposition — the graceful death.

He refers to a recent example, the book *Coming to Terms with Death*, and quotes from the publisher's blurb: "A do it yourself book on how to die gracefully . . . the perfect gift for Mom." Such a ludicrous advertisement could easily be dismissed or become grist for the comedian's mill — except that the attitude it betrays is so pervasive and its theoretical underpinnings cut deeper than it first appears. To return to our example of grief management, what is so striking is the total fixation on the self. Lattanzi expresses it quite well:

> Basically . . . people are mirrors in our lives. We spend our lives getting close to people, and certain people reflect dimensions or parts of ourselves as we'd like to see ourselves. So when we lose someone who is important to us, it's like a piece of ourselves taken away. And the way we have seen ourselves is no longer the way we are now.

What is mind-boggling in this statement (in which the personal and possessive pronoun is repeated twelve times) is the complete forgetfulness of what occasioned the grief, the death of the other. The death of the unique and irreplaceable other becomes a fissure in ourselves that needs to be therapeutically repaired. The death of the other as an-other is repressed and,

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ironically, the very devil which the movement sought to expel returns with a vengeance. It is but a short step, then, to deny one's own death, to view it as illusion, or merely (in Kübler-Ross's quaintly reassuring phrase) "A transition." After all, how could this marvelously self-managed and self-developed person ever face a real break in its existence?

One of the most pernicious effects of the sexual revolution has been the complete blurring of the distinction between public and private. Love — which includes the intimate feelings, desires, and acts of lovers — has been exposed, even flaunted, under the garish light of the leering public eye. By denying love the dark and sheltering intimacy it needs, we have transformed it into something else, a mere exhibition complete with self-glorified exhibitors and an array of voyeuristic spectators. Such exhibitionism has now crept into the dying process so that the privacy of the bedroom where one loved and died has been totally violated.

Curiously, though perhaps not surprisingly, the violation often finds the dying victim cooperating, even inviting the display of his or her own demise. Film seems to be the medium of choice, and we are now inundated with *Cinéma Vérité* analysis of the last dying gasp of the cancer-ridden, the elderly, and even the suicidal. The narcissist, Lasch pointed out, "cannot live without an admiring audience" and so it is hardly surprising that the urge to self-display would be found here even though one might hope a sense of dignity and shame (now, perhaps, outdated) would inhibit the performance.

If cinema is the more dramatic expression of this "publicization" of the private, a less dramatic though more universal example is the almost continual and incessant stream of chatter about dying that the movement has fostered. A cardinal sin of the movement is not to verbalize how you feel about your dying. Thanatology trainees spend a good deal of their time learning how to elicit the appropriate responses. On a certain superficial level it's all a bit tiresome, reminding one of the old vaudeville routine where the "corpse" keeps rising out of the coffin for one last admonition to the harried family until finally, out of exasperation, they just close the lid. Yet, on a deeper level, there seems to be a lack of realization that in the face of such an awesome event as death silence may well be the only appropriate response. In the *Book of Revelation*, "there was silence in heaven for about a half an hour" when the Lamb broke open the seventh seal. Such was the traditional wisdom, but in today's world death has become public and perhaps lost its awe-full character. Yet it is probably more the case that by making it public we have, like children insisting on their night light, simply repressed for a while the very real darkness that hovers over our beds.

The upshot of this progressive "publicization" of death is that it has given the movement professionals a rationalization for some highly intrusive methods. In one metropolitan hospital, the social workers were insisting that they be called immediately upon the death of the patient and, despite innocent intentions, one could not help but see one more professional cadre crowding arounding the bedside to get a piece of the action. Indeed, one fear, perhaps not all that remote or silly, is that these same professionals will soon seek to determine who is "qualified" enough to "deal with" the dying.

THE ARGUMENT of this essay has, by now, I trust, come into sharper focus. The thanatology movement — at least in some quarters — has succeeded in sentimentalizing, trivializing, and leveling down death until it has become but one more overexposed event in the life of "homo dominator." Death has lost its power and its sting, not because of the transcendent mystery that is faith, but because it has been stripped of its terror and transformed into an ordinary event subject to our will to control. In short, it has been secularized.

One need not be "religious" to sense that when every human event becomes so leveled down and equalized — grist for the managerial mill — then, as Bob Dylan put it, "there's nothing really sacred." Ironically, even some believers, whether wittingly or not, are not immune from such reductionistic tendencies. Yet, in one of the few perceptive articles on death and dying (in *Social Research* for Autumn, 1972), William May hammers home the distinction of the sacred from the profane and its implication for our will to control.

> . . . The sacred is distinguished from ordinary profane power in that it does not appear as something that man can fully master and use toward his own appointed ends. It confounds the efforts of the practical man to control it and the contemplative man to know it. It is full of surprises and therefore it insists upon its own unfolding; refusing to submit to the normal procedures by which ordinary, profane, secular man handles his life.

To lose the sense of the sacred, what transcends us, overwhelms us, measures us, is to lose the sense of ourselves, our vulnerability, our shame, our finitude. Death is or ought to be a continual, albeit painful, reminder of that. Yet of such frailty the thanatology movement wants no reminder. Their muddled attack on the "obscenity of death" is particularly instructive. When they call death the "last obscenity" they seem to have in mind the refusal to speak about it and deal openly with it. Properly corrected, our attitude toward death will lose its obscene character and, like our sexual comportment, bask in open and liberated expression.

The confusion here is two-fold. First of all, publicness could hardly be the remedy for the obscene since it is the public display of intimate acts that fuels our voyeuristic intents. Rather than harmful inhibitions, the covert and surreptitious glances that often accompany the viewing of obscene matters might well be indices of shame, recognizing that some things ought not be viewed — not at least without the sheltering commitment of love or, in the case of death, grief.

Secondly, it is not in the name of the sacred (as one might expect) that the obscenity of death is attacked but a rather more mundane effort to level the experience to more manageable

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proportions. Such naive leveling underestimates the power of the obscene to shock and violate. Yet one can only violate what was first held to be sacred. Obscenity is the sacred's counter-image. Contemporary culture seems hell-bent on liberating us from any sense of violation and thereby eliminating altogether the category of the obscene. Yet in a world where nothing is obscene, nothing can be saved. And so no longer exposed to the obscenity of death, we are now treated (by the new thanatology experts) to its utter banality.

The terror and the shame have been therapeutically excised from death, as evidenced in the droning boredom of films like *Joan Robinson: One Woman's Story* or the silly saccharine placebos of the spiritualist in *Poltergeist* or finally, the trendy proclamation by Kübler-Ross that we should no longer speak of death, only another "transition." Such therapeutic surgery is nothing more than an intellectual lobotomy that cuts us off from the terrifying experience of what lies beyond our control. Instead, we need to stand humble before this humbling event, suffer its indignity, and perhaps reverence what may lay beyond it. "There is nothing to be done toward the sacred," writes William May, "except to let it be what it is, permit it to run its course, and let one's own life be caught up in its force." Such an attitude would resist the temptation to reduce the strange to the familiar, the dreadful to the manageable, the careful to the ordinary. Again, in May's words, it would simply "let death be death."

EARLY ON IN this reflection I quoted Hannah Arendt's injunction that we "think what we do." I should like to close in a similar chord by invoking the memory of the poet John Keats whose verse represents an authentic encounter with death as death. One poem in particular, the "Ode to a Nightingale," is wrenched from his experience of ministering to his dying brother. Here is the real world of dying, the "fever and the fret . . . where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin and dies." He even speaks of the temptation to be "half in love with easeful Death" but resolutely bids it "adieu" realizing "the fancy cannot cheat so well as she is famed to do."

Like Arendt, Keats knew full well our task — only in a world of suffering and death it is a melancholy one — here "where but *to think* is to be full of sorrow and leaden-eyed despairs." What redeems such agony is not the faddish gimmicks of the thanatology movement but men and women of virtue who with humility and courage suffer the shame of death rather than manage it away. In such a crucible, what Keats called the "vale of soul making," and only in such a crucible might we then become emboldened to speak. But even then our speech would be the language of indirection, a poem (of the nightingale) a song (about the blues) or a story (from the Bible). As Homer long ago reminded us — "any sorrow can be borne if it is told in a story." Such an attitude which let death be death would ultimately redound to those who remain and then, perhaps, life might truly be life.

'DON'T CALL ME NO SENIOR CITIZEN'

An afternoon with an elderly respondent

KATHARINE BYRNE

"Most elderly respondents report that the sequential experiences of their day-to-day existence are basically satisfying, especially as these relate to the achievement of an equitable resolution to earlier familial and cultural conflicts."

I FOUND THIS ponderous quotation in a report of a seminar on aging, a subject which, if not yet close to my heart, is already knocking at my arteries. If these words mean what I think they mean, they are reassuring. When one considers how ill-tempered, acrimonious, and feisty the rest of us are, it is good to hear that the elderly, in their wisdom, have attained a state of equilibrium, accommodation, and generosity that their children and their children's children fail to achieve. Yet I hesitate to convey this information to you without also telling you something about the only elderly respondent I have ever actually known, my neighbor Cora Weatherby.

One day last fall I heard Cora's insistent telephone voice giving me a directive. "Kathern, you got to come over tomorrow at two o'clock."

"I do? What for, Cora?"

"Just listen to this." And she read me a letter asking her "cooperation in a study of the attitudes of mature members of our community."

Some researcher at the University must have got Cora's name from the Nutrition Site where she eats lunch twice a week, complaining about the soy beans in the meat loaf and those old people "full of aches and pains and dying to tell you about them." While impressed by the word "gerontological," which she sounded-out carefully, she was also suspicious of

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anyone connected with the University. Cora's impressions of that institution were picked up in the thirties, when a local drugstore owner declared in newspaper headlines that his daughter was being fed Communist propaganda in her freshman survey course.

"Coming from that place," she reminded me, "you never know what might turn up."

Cora's the last of the old settlers in our neighborhood. Her father was one of the shrewd developers who sold off their farm acres in thirty- and fifty-foot lots when Swedish and German aspirants to the good life moved here after World War I. I can remember him tending his roses, lovingly encouraging them to climb the trellises he made in his basement workshop, introducing them to anyone who paused at his back gate: "This is Mrs. William Howard Taft . . . Madame Chiang Kai-shek . . . The Dutchess of Windsor . . . " You'd think you were at a diplomatic reception.

After the death of her parents, Cora lived on in the square red-brick two-story house. Late-in-life, she married Fletcher Weatherby, a kind of handyman in the neighborhood; not too handy, was the local opinion. This union yielded one fat child, Gloria, now grown up and moved out. Fletcher's impulses as a homeowner seemed essentially destructive. He told anyone who would listen that the roses his wife's father had cherished were of inferior stock, woody, and worn-out; and that he intended to replace them with spectacular new hybrids. Well, he never got around to it.

One summer day about seven years ago, Fletcher drove out to the Arlington Park Race Track, and he hasn't returned. The contents of one bank account went with him. He did send a postcard picture of palms and azaleas around the clubhouse at Hialeah. Cora keeps it on the mantel, propped against an empty bud vase, next to Gloria's graduation picture. Gloria's married to Milo, a man whose first wife, in Cora's words, "took off with a door-to-door photographer," leaving behind two unphotogenic children.

When Gloria visits her mother, she brings these children with her, and they rage up and down the stairs and beat on the tin sides of the clothes chute. "They call me 'grandma,' " Cora says of them, "but not with no encouragement from me."

Their father she describes as "a little man full of big ideas for using my money which he will get over my dead body, and if I can help it, not even then."

Cora does keep busy. With her radio tuned to voices that tie moral turpitude to political degeneracy — and in the last national election found both qualities in the party that lost — she deals with local matters of concern to her. Using the binoculars Fletcher forgot to take with him that day, she checks license plates and reports them to federal agencies, convinced that the mild-mannered Mr. Chung, who drives a cab by day, studies accounting at night, and lives across the street from her, also trafficks in drugs. Did Cora, perhaps, see too many Charlie Chan movies during her formative years?

She can also see into the basement of the Manousos family on the other side of her alley. "They're building bedrooms down there for all these people they say are their cousins from Sparta. I should get in touch with the Zoning Board," she tells me.

"Cora,' I remind her with self-conscious virtue, "Your own father was an immigrant. He used to find room for all those Norwegian boys looking for jobs as carpenters' helpers. Why can't you live and let live? Besides, what you are seeing through those binoculars are the practice rooms Mr. Himmelfarb made years ago for his violin students. Don't you remember?"

"I remember no such thing," is her answer. Indeed, years ago she didn't think much of Himmelfarb's enterprise either: all those earnest little boys carrying instrument cases and wearing embroidered yarmulkes.

AT THE APPOINTED hour, I picked my way through the weeds in Cora's yard, stumbling into holes where her father's roses used to grow, the ground taken over now by plantain and Russian Thistle. Long gone are the trellises old Larsen was so proud of, one slat after another rotted away.

As she opened her door Cora looked grave but also pleased with herself, dressed in frilly lavender that fit better when she weighed less, wearing the headcovering reserved for festive occasions: a "curly chestnut wig with golden glints," it was called in the advertisement, and she had bought it for her own seventy-fifth birthday.

Cora indicated a young woman who stood there fiddling with recording equipment, her clipboard and briefcase on the dining room table. Cora eyed the researcher and the tools of her trade warily; both were foreign to her. Accustomed to clear distinctions and ready-made labels she was receiving confused signals as the operator pushed keys that set off clicks and whirrings from the cassette recorder. And what was she to make of the investigator herself, who was wearing, along with a fixed expression of professional good will, hair that hung straight, almost to her waist; a tweed jacket frayed at cuffs and buttonholes; the kind of embroidered cotton blouse you might find in a thrift shop; a long skirt of faded denim. In disbelief, Cora focused on the woman's argyle-knit socks rising out of peasant's clogs, the kind Cora's own grandmother might have worn in Trondheim.

In a voice louder than necessary, and slowly, as though addressing a child with a learning disability, the interviewer began to speak.

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"Mrs. Weatherby, I hope you will just talk freely about yourself and how you feel about your life in this house; and also about your neighbors and your family. First, though, I do want to assure you of the value of your opinions. We realize that senior citizens like yourself . . . "

Cora's back stiffened. How often I have heard her say, "Sure I'm an old lady, but don't call me no senior citizen."

As the interviewer's set speech came to a close, Cora shifted her weight, and a puff of dust rose from a break in the upholstery. Cora doesn't have much time for housekeeping, but she had for this occasion cleared away some of the coffee cups, old copies of *The Enquirer*, and pill bottles, to make room for her questioner's equipment. She had emptied the usually overflowing orange plastic ash tray from The Dells, but the table's surface was still covered with a gray mottling of old Marlboros and spilt coffee.

Now Cora launched into her own recital. "I been living here in this house all my life. When my family moved here everybody was Swedish or German, or a few Norwegians like us. When my folks died I stayed here, and I married Fletcher Weatherby, a building contractor. For seven years now I been a widow." Hearing old Fletcher thus promoted and disposed of, I glanced at the mantel. The Hialeah postcard was not there.

Cora proceeded smoothly. "I got this one child, my daughter Gloria, married to a fine man and they got two lovely children. She and Milo say all the time, 'Mama, come live with us,' but I say to them, 'You got your life, I got mine.' Even if I can't keep up like I used to. Like my husband's rose garden, y'know? Kids come through the yard and tear everything out, all the roses. Naturally, things aren't the same no more. But I get some real good food and I meet some nice people at the nutrition place. Even if the old timers are dead or moved away, whoever's here now, they got their rights like the rest of us. Live and let live, I say."

As Cora hit this high-minded note, I knew that she needed no help from me. I invented a spaghetti sauce that needed stirring and turned to leave. The last thing I heard was a good word for Milo. In response to the question, "To whom would you turn for financial advice or assistance," Cora invented "my son-in-law Milo, real good at handling money."

The next time I stopped in, I did notice that the Hialeah clubhouse was once more leaning against the bud vase. As soon as she plugged in the coffee pot, Cora tore into "Milo's latest idiot scheme."

"Now he wants to buy into a pistachio nut farm and needs $2,000, from me, who else, and he sure won't get it."

She also reported a heated exchange with Mr. Bastidas, a branch of whose maple hangs over her driveway. "I've called Sanitation and Forestry and the Corporation Counsel's office. Sure he says he'll cut it off as soon as he can borrow a chain saw. But can you trust those kind of people?" Mr. Bastidas is an engineer who was born in Ecuador. Sometimes Cora calls him, "that wetback."

When I could resist my prying impulse no longer, I asked, "Cora, what did you think about the research project?"

"You mean that odd-looking person who asked me all those questions? I didn't mind talking to her. There's no harm in it, I guess. You just have to be careful what you say to them."

OUR OLD-FASHIONED REACTION TO FLIGHT 007

America's nostalgic liberalism

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

THE RUSSIANS are to European civilization what the Macedonians were to ancient Greek civilization. In many respects the Macedonians looked and acted like members of the Greek world; and yet they weren't quite Greek; something was always just a bit awry. They'd borrow this or that element of Greek culture (e.g., they'd hire Plato's star pupil to tutor young Alexander), but just when you thought they might be getting the hang of it they'd go ahead and do something indicating they had missed the whole point. There was the memorable occasion, for instance, when Alexander, punishing Thebes for resisting him, spared the house in which Pindar had lived while tearing every other building in the city to the ground.

Just when you think the Russians may be moving ever so gradually toward a more civilized state (their young people wearing jeans and listening to rock 'n' roll, their government officials and factory managers taking kickbacks, their political dissidents being sent to psychiatric hospitals instead of the Gulag) they proceed, like not-quite-Hellenized Macedonians, to shoot down the Korean Air Lines plane, killing 269 persons. In reflecting on this event, it is difficult to decide which is more astonishing, the callousness of the Soviets or their stupidity; it is equally difficult to decide whether these deficiencies manifested themselves more plainly in the perverse downing of the plane or in the equally perverse refusal to repent afterwards.

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The Russians, I'm afraid, are hopeless.

Less fascinating, but still instructive, has been the American reaction to this tragedy. Of international crimes in recent years, only the taking of hostages in Iran moved Americans to the unanimous and heartfelt indignation they expressed when the Soviets destroyed the Korean plane and its passengers. In many ways, of course, our outrage is easy to understand, both in the Iranian case and the Russian. After all, those were our countrymen held captive in Teheran; moreover, they weren't just any compatriots, but diplomatic officials, representatives and symbols of the nation. And the plane that went down in the Sea of Japan carried to their deaths more than sixty of our fellow-citizens, including a U.S. Congressman, while the remaining victims, from a number of nations, were all civilians — women, children, and old folk among them. What American could fail to be indignant at crimes like this?

But in comparison to other events in recent times, the hostage and airline affairs, dreadful though they may have been, were small change. Think of Biafra. Think of Cambodia. Think of Argentina and "the disappeared." Think of Uganda, of El Salvador, of the Vietnamese "boat people." Whether measured in terms of the numbers of victims involved or in terms of the malice of the perpetrators, each of these was a far, far more horrible crime than either the shooting down of the Korean plane or the taking of hostages in Iran. Yet it is the plane and the hostages that provoked us to our huge righteous indignation, while we remained collectively almost indifferent to the other, the far vaster, the far more savage crimes. Why do we strain at Soviet and Iranian gnats while swallowing great quantities of camels from Cambodia, Argentina, and elsewhere?

THOUGH THERE ARE no doubt many reasons for this disproportionate reaction, let me call attention to one reason — possibly the most important of them all. We are, as everyone knows, a nostalgic nation, in love with Fonzie and Harry S. Truman among others. But our deepest nostalgia is for the golden age of liberalism, an era which commenced its career in America in 1776, reached the height of its career during the nineteenth century, and came to a sudden and catastrophic end in August, 1914.

Henry Luce called the twentieth the "American century," but it was really the nineteenth that deserved that name. In those days America was not yet a superpower; we were still something better than that. We were the most conspicuous embodiment of the age's leading social and political ideal, liberal democracy; and only cynics or exceedingly sharp-eyed readers of the signs of the times suspected that the world as a whole wasn't going to follow us in the direction we were heading. Then we influenced the world more by our example than we do now by our might.

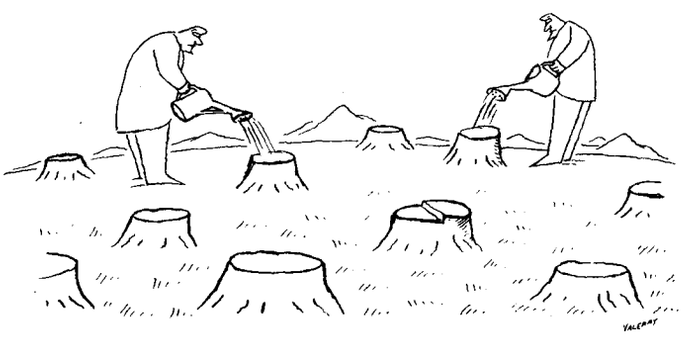
We have, in short, a nineteenth century political superego. And by nineteenth century standards the incidents of the hostages and the Korean airplane were terribly shocking, reminders that the world is not yet a completely civilized place, that despite all our progress there are still some semi-barbarous regimes tragically deficient in humanitarianism and respect for legality. But by twentieth century standards, those incidents are mere trifles. After Auschwitz, after the Gulag, after humanity's living for a generation under the nuclear sword of Damocles, what are a few dozen hostages or an airliner shot down?

Only a nineteenth century liberal could react as we have done to the Soviet and Iranian events. As for genuine twentieth century horrors, the nineteenth century conscience hardly knows how to respond, for they exceed the bounds of the imaginable. Having discharged the full force of our indignation on crimes which are, so to speak, of a human scale, how can we possibly respond to crimes a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand times worse?

The answer is, obviously, that we cannot. We go numb — so numb in fact that we may be induced to participate in twentieth century crimes ourselves, e.g., the obliteration bombing of cities, including but not limited to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and preparations for the thermonuclear destruction of a great portion of the human race. Our conscience cannot really grasp the enormity of such crimes; nor can we find our way back to the world we think we have a right to be living in, a world in which such crimes — so huge, so monstrous to conceive — are impossible.

What a relief it is, then, to discover from time to time a good old-fashioned, human-scale, nineteenth century political crime, like the killing of airline passengers or the taking of hostages. In a burst of very satisfying indignation we almost persuade ourselves for a moment that we are living once again in the golden age, when the only serious obstacles to world-wide freedom and civility were Asiatic benightedness and Russian perversity.

This American nostalgia for nineteenth century liberalism doesn't say much for our realism. But so what? Old-fashioned liberal democracy, with its hope for a world in which free and reasonable men would dwell in peace with one another, was arguably the noblest political vision humankind has yet achieved. Though its hour is past, it is well that someone should keep this vision alive, if only as a piece of nostalgia. For who knows, perhaps after a few centuries of gigantic horrors, the world may someday once again feel a desire to become civilized. At that moment it will be helpful if a nation or two still remembers, as a kind of family tradition, the last time such an attempt was made.



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Screen

DePALMA'S VIOLENCE

'SCARFACE'

I HAVE an affection for overreaching failures, films of quixotic ambition that riskily explore the possibilities of the medium. Such work is often frustrating because it denies us the comfort of satisfied expectation. I prefer originality to unearned coherence, want films to offer me, in several senses, new ways of seeing.

I offer these prefatory remarks to explain my affection for the films of Brian DePalma, which have been the subjects of controversy at least in part because of their apparent violence. I say apparent because much, if not all, of the violent action in DePalma's movies is highly stylized, is not meant to be taken as real life, is movie violence. It is important to distinguish between violence in art (or entertainment) and violence in the real world, a distinction too often muddled in the heat of outrage. What disturbs us most about DePalma's cinema is not the violence itself, which is dreamlike, but violations of conventional expectation. One of the impulses of DePalma's work — perhaps the central impulse — is to assault complacency, to startle and disturb.

Before it opened, DePalma's remake of *Scarface* (the Howard Hawks classic was made in 1932 and based on the career of Al Capone) had already become notorious by receiving an X rating solely on the basis of violence. Insisting on the film's artistic integrity, DePalma refused to cut or make changes and ultimately won an R rating for the original three-hour version. Nevertheless, the movie's sensational reputation — it is extremely rare for a mainstream commercial film to be X-rated — preceded its appearance. For those who take vicarious pleasure in filmed violence, *Scarface* can only be a disappointment.

The most disturbing violence in *Scarface* is left to the imagination, is conspicuously offscreen, and is all the more awful as a consequence. Some thugs kill a man with a chain saw while the central character, Tony Montana, a cohort of the victim, is forced to look on. The scene is handled with extreme, really ominous, tact. Nothing is shown (though the possibility that we will be forced to look keeps us on edge), no screams are heard. The camera cuts away for a period of time to a parallel scene in the street outside. The chain saw episode, which takes place early in the film, is used not to inure us to violence but to sensitize us to its horror — to this particular horror — to make us ready for anything.

Unlike DePalma's best films, *Carrie, Obsession,* and *Dressed to Kill,* which are nightmare fantasies and achieve their power through imagery and metaphor, *Scarface* pretends to be about the real world. It is about a Cuban punk from one of Castro's jails, who comes to Miami to pursue a version of the American dream. Through fearlessness and a kind of insane integrity, Tony Montana seizes opportunity and becomes a successful gangster. The same excessiveness that brings Montana to the top of his profession — the film means to be about both the capitalist ethic and tragic rise and fall — causes him finally to self-destruct, and so *Scarface* is also a cautionary tale. Those who live by violence die by violence. Montana's defect is that his all-consuming voraciousness is essentially unobjectified. Once he achieves his limited goal there is nothing left for him to do but create the occasion for his destruction. The last extraordinary sequence, which is beautifully choreographed by DePalma, almost dignifies Montana's sleazy career by the impressiveness of its conclusion. It is an imaginative tour-de-force unrelated to the film as a whole.

There is a confusion, really complexity, of tone in most of DePalma's films (an uneasy mix of parody and exaggerated seriousness); and in *Scarface* it is particularly difficult to get one's bearings. (The ambivalence of tone is one of the legacies of Hitchcock's and Godard's influence on the director.) The excess in *Scarface* has comic implication, but to what effect? The tone, and the self-consciousness it generates, seems like an inherited mannerism, one of several unassimilated ideas.

The implicit question of a film like *Scarface* is why is a vicious punk worthy of our attention at such protracted length. The first and obvious answer is that Tony Montana provides a performance tour-de-force for Al Pacino, an actor of exciting skill and resourcefulness. But the role of Montana is too cramped, too without sufficient variation or growth to give the remarkable Pacino full range of his gifts. The second answer, and the one the film offers us as an emblem of its seriousness, is that the story of Tony Montana has both social (he is the bastard son of capitalism) and mythic implications. *Scarface* makes a number of self-conscious statements about itself (one of the characters says "Nothing exceeds like excess."), seems self-mocking about its own social seriousness. Sometimes DePalma's characteristic ironies work effectively in *Scarface*; more often they seem irrelevant.

DePalma's *Scarface*, then, is an overlong, self-conflicted movie full of brilliant unassimilated ideas. Whenever the sequences are inspired as in the assassination attempt in the garish *arriviste* Miami restaurant in which Montana and his cronies hang out, the film is dazzling and suggests what the whole might have been if the work were significantly shorter and more of the material were congenial to the impulse of DePalma's talent. In the director's most characteristic films, the action tends to comment on itself — the act and the judgment of the act as one. DePalma makes movies about movies — movies about making movies, about watching movies, about making and watching them in the same imaginative act. He is less a storyteller than a maker of images that sometimes come together into a story. It is not violence that vitiates *Scarface* but grandiosity and insufficient audacity. The film goes too far and not far enough. From my bias, it is still worth the price of admission.

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SUDDEN IMPACT is, in ways that count, a more violent movie than *Scarface*. It is interesting to see the two films in conjunction because the hero of *Sudden Impact*, Dirty Harry, (played by Clint Eastwood for the fourth time) behaves not so differently from the criminal protagonist of *Scarface*. Dirty Harry is a law unto himself, a useful (and murderous) corrective to the ostensible impotence of civilized justice.

The implication of this skillful and manipulative melodrama is that the law, because of constitutional restraints, is incapable of punishing vicious criminals. In order to preserve civilization, policemen like Dirty Harry have to make themselves into avenging angels of the unprotected. This behavior seems almost reasonable within the highly charged and distorted context of the movie because the criminal suspects we meet tend to be blatantly guilty and unredeemably depraved.

Sudden Impact, which is also directed by Eastwood, disguises its inconsistencies with impressive skill, is satisfying (as vengeance films tend to be) by fulfilling our most primitive feelings. It is a fantasy after all, a *policier* with the configurations of a western. When viewing, leave social and political considerations at home.

JONATHAN BAUMBACH

(Commonweal's movie reviews are currently being written by guest critics. A novelist, editor, and widely published critic, Jonathan Baumbach has written on film for Partisan Review, Harper's, *and other journals.)*

Art

DAZZLING ORDINARY

FAIRFIELD PORTER

SINCE THE EARLY nineteenth century, region has been an important force in American painting. We don't just think of artists such as Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, and Grant Wood as American landscape painters. We think of them as men who benefited from a sense of place, who made the Hudson Valley, the Rocky Mountains, the farm country of Iowa their subject. In this commitment to place Fairfield Porter has been equally traditional. Of the more than 140 paintings that constitute the Boston Museum of Fine Arts 1983 Fairfield Porter retrospective, all but a handful center on Southampton or Great Spruce Head Island, Maine.

But Porter is an exception in the way he valued place. For his regional predecessors, place was not merely subject matter they knew intimately. Place was America in microcosm. It was the country as nature's nation that emerged from Cole's river valley and Bierstadt's mountains and Wood's fields. Their point in painting and repainting a region was to gain the freedom to generalize about it. From Porter, no such iconographic claims are forthcoming. The Northeast Atlantic Coast is where he lived and liked to paint, but he never dreamed of suggesting that his Southampton or Maine were America in microcosm. Such a claim would have struck Porter as tendentious. The last thing he wanted to be classified as was one of "the illustrators of the American scene."

One result of Porter's restraint is that his realism has never commanded a wide audience. He has not, in the fashion of an Andrew Wyeth, endeared himself to the public. Instead, he has been seen as a stylistic conservative content to paint the private lives of the upper middle class. As John Updike observed in a recent essay, Porter's world seems to consist primarily of "nice people, nice places, pleasantly redolent of affection and sensitivity and, that great underwriter of both, money."

For Porter, this lack of widespread popularity was never a problem. Born in Winnetka, Illinois in 1907 to wealthy parents, Porter never had to work for a living or depend on patrons to sustain his career. After graduating from Harvard in 1928 with a degree in fine arts, he moved to New York and enrolled in the Art Students League, where his teachers were Thomas Hart Benton and Boardman Robinson. Their influence on him was minimal, but that of French artist Edouard Vuillard was enormous, and a year after seeing a Vuillard exhibition at the Chicago Art Institute, Porter at the age of thirty-two had his first one-man show. From this point on, his career quietly began to build. During the 1950s Porter acquired tremendous influence as a critic for *Art News*, and in that same decade he began to gain a reputation as an artist's artist — the leader of a group of painters that included Alex Katz, Robert Dash, Jane Freilicher, and Neil Welliver. By 1961, when he quit reviewing to give full time to his own work, Porter was firmly established in New York art circles, and from then until his death in 1975, he had fourteen one-man shows and taught at Amherst, Yale, Southampton College, and the Maryland Institute.

What was it that made Porter such a success within the art world but not outside it? The answer becomes clear when we turn to one of the most successful paintings he did during the late 1960s, *Island Farmhouse*. As a realistic work, *Island Farmhouse* is a perfect case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. The ocean, a small boat, a dog, and a clapboard house are shown in perfect harmony with each other on a bright summer day. They are rendered without great detail (the boat has the look of a child's toy; one of the dog's legs rests at an impossible angle). Nonetheless each balances the other out, and in the end the painting slowly succeeds. Its delicacy wins out over its amateurism.

All such qualifications vanish, however, the minute we change perspectives and look at *Island Farmhouse* as a colorist painting in which the real subject, as Porter wrote of the work of his friend Willem de Kooning, is "the nature of paint as the artist's object of contemplation." An everyday scene that was previously both charming and amateurish is suddenly transformed. We are no longer presented with a casual seascape but a painting carefully structured around a series of monochrome expanses of color. From the yellow-green of the foreground lawn, we are moved to the dark-green shadow cast

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by the house to another yellow-green patch, and from there to a dark-blue expanse of ocean and lighter-blue expanse of sky. The house, the dog, the boat, and two islands break up what would otherwise be an abstract painting, but now their presence is anything but incidental. They are part of a color scheme of immense subtlety, one that operates in terms of its own spatial construction and at the same time risks being overlooked by virtue of its unassertiveness.

What the Museum of Fine Arts retrospective, which in 1984 will complete its five-city tour with stops in Pittsburgh and New York, makes clear is that the subtlety and rigor of *Island Farmhouse* is no accident. In painting upon painting we see that from the 1960s on Porter has become a master in his use of light and color. His insistence on painting "things as they are" led him to transform whatever was around him — whether it was the view from a screen porch, a clump of Persian rose bushes, or the breakfast dishes on an uncleared table. In the profusion of color and light that radiates from the canvases Porter did during these years, we are not, however, simply seeing an artist who has at last come into his own. We are also seeing what is lost when Porter is characterized as the painter of the upper middle class, namely, his passionate belief in the accessibility of beauty.

Throughout his major work Porter takes every opportunity available to show that the light and color he is most dazzled by abound. The point where nature and society interact with each other in the most seemingly pedestrian of ways fascinated him, and in his best paintings he continually returns to this point, developing it rather than pursuing more overtly dramatic subjects. In *The Privet Hedge* he allows a passing retriever to interrupt a Monet-like plane of color. In *The Harbor – Great Spruce Head* he gives as much care to a water tank as the dock leading to the ocean. In *Landscape with Two Parked Cars* he treats two automobiles as a natural part of the country.

After opening at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Porter retrospective traveled to the Greenville County Museum of Art in South Carolina and the Cleveland Museum of Art during 1983. In 1984 it will be at the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, from February 18 to April 22, and at the Whitney Museum of Art in New York from May 31 to July 22.

The result, as Porter once said of Vuillard, is that "what he's doing seems to be ordinary, but the extraordinary is everywhere." But to point this out is only to describe the aesthetic consequences of Porter's achievement. What is going on in Porter's work is political as well and, in the most concrete ways, egalitarian in its implications. We cannot, if we care about beauty, act like so many twentieth-century Thoreaus searching for Walden, Porter implicitly argues throughout his painting. We must learn to be nourished by what lies before us, by what characterizes our society's compromised relationship with nature. Rightly seen a car need not be an intruder on the landscape any more than a water tank or a stray dog. The trick is to take them all in: to see with a "first timeness" of vision. NICOLAUS MILLS

(Nicolaus Mills teaches at Sarah Lawrence and writes frequently on art for Commonweal.*)*

Religious Book Week: CRITICS' CHOICES

George G. Higgins

MSGR. GEORGE G. HIGGINS *is adjunct lecturer in theology at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.*

Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching, Donal Dorr. Orbis Books. $11.95, 328 pp.

THIS is the best post-Vatican II book in the English language on Vatican social teaching, which, for Father Dorr's purposes, includes not only papal statements but the documents of Vatican II and the Synod of Bishops in Rome and the documents issued by the Latin American bishops at Medellin and Puebla. Dorr, an Irish missionary priest who has combined a distinguished teaching career at Maynooth College, Ireland, with extensive educational and pastoral experience in Africa and Latin America, is constructively critical of Vatican social teaching, avoiding "sycophantic fundamentalism" on the one hand and corrosive cynicism on the other. He is also very good at putting official church documents in proper historical focus and perspective. Highly recommended.

The Bishop of Rome, J.M.R. Tillard, O.P. Michael Glazier, $17.95, $12.95, paper, 242 pp.

Father Tillard, a distinguished French Canadian theologian who has long been involved in significant ecumenical work at the international level, is courageously but respectfully honest in analyzing the question of authority in the church which, in his judgment, is the great obstacle to Christian unity. He argues "without prevarication" that "the Roman primacy which belongs to the mystery of the church in her pilgrimage on earth and cannot be dispensed without doing violence to God's plan," can and should be exercised in a more collegial manner. More specifically, he would give greater authority to national and regional bishops' conferences and to the Synod of Bishops. A competent theologian and a man of profound faith in the workings of the Holy Spirit, he deserves a serious and respectful hearing even or especially at the highest levels of the Roman Curia.

Solidarity: Poland 1980-1981, Alain Touraine, François Dubet, Michel Wieviorka, and Jan Strzelecki. Cambridge University Press. $17.95, 203 pp.

The most carefully researched and, in

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many respects, the most impressive of the fifteen or twenty books in English on the Polish labor movement, Solidarity. The authors, a collaborative team of French and Polish sociologists who engaged in a fruitful dialogue in several Polish cities with articulate Solidarity militants, emphasize repeatedly that Solidarity is not "a mechanical reaction to oppression which has become unbearable; it manifests ideas, choices, a collective will." The militants of Solidarity, they conclude, "do not simply overturn obstacles; they affirm principles and values, their will and their consciousness make them actors in their own history." In the end, please God, their historic movement, whose light "shines on us all," will come back to life again, phoenix-like, and bring freedom to Poland and (who knows?) to other Soviet satellite nations as well.

The Power of the Poor in History, Gustavo Gutierrez. Orbis Books. $10.95, 240 pp.

This compilation of eight lengthy essays by the dean of Latin American liberation theologians complements and enriches the principles outlined in his earlier classic, *A Theology of Liberation*. It also gives the lie to those who persist in saying, whether innocently or with malice aforethought, that Gutierrez is a Marxist wolf in Christian sheep's clothing. As he patiently explained in a recent interview in Cincinnati, his overriding concern is not to "preach liberation theology but to be Christian . . . the main point is the presence of the Gospel in our people. Maybe liberation theology is helpful for that. It's only a means." His new book is required reading not only for his critics but for anyone who wants to know what liberation theology is all about.

The Bishops and the Bomb: Waging Peace in a Nuclear Age. With the text of the Bishops' 1983 Pastoral Letter. Jim Castelli. Image Doubleday.$7.95, 283 pp.

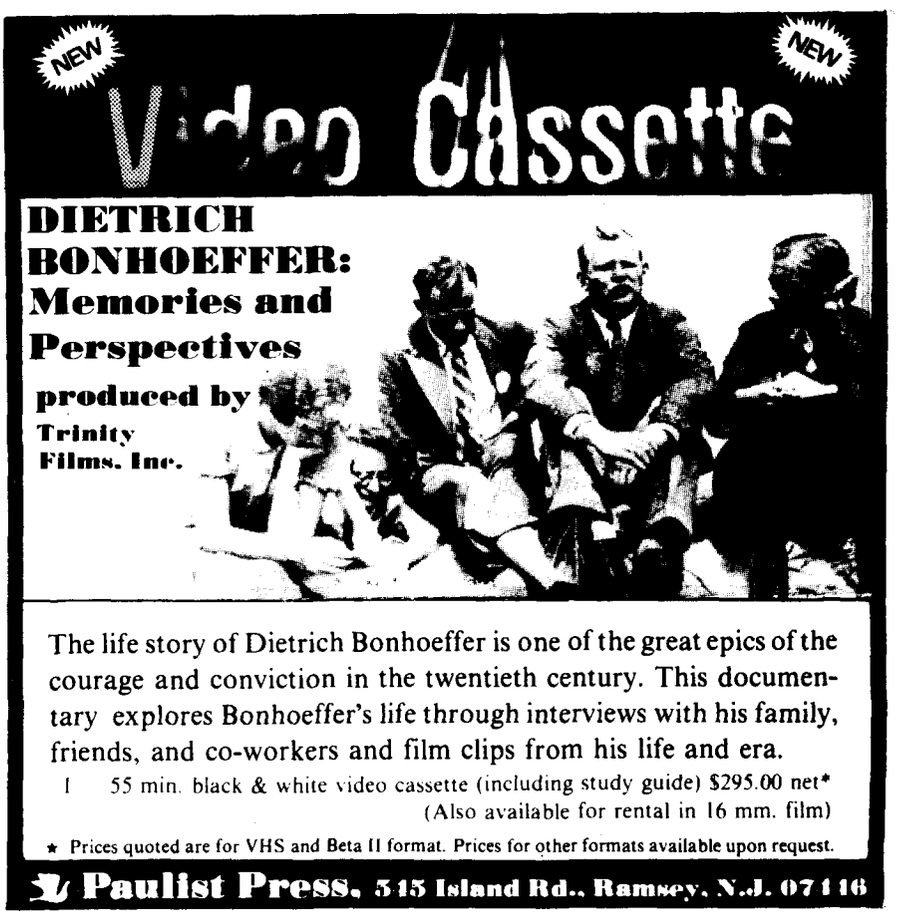
This is the legislative history of the U.S. bishops' historic 1983 Pastoral on War and Peace as told by one of the best-informed and most perceptive Catholic journalists in the United States. It speaks well for the bishops that they allowed Castelli ongoing access to their files while the Pastoral was being drafted and debated and gave him complete freedom to publish his findings without prior censorship of any kind and with no guarantee as to how the book would turn out. It turned out very well indeed. Don't miss it.

Anne Carr

ANNE CARR *is a member of the faculty of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, presently spending a year in the Women Studies in Religion Program at the Harvard Divinity School.*

FEMINIST theology is characterized by its explicit focus on the experience of women as an important and long neglected source for reflection. Three of the following books show that Christian feminist reflection on women's experience has moved beyond protest against the theological tradition's denigration and exclusion of women to a new stage of historical revisioning and systematic synthesis. The fourth is a novel by a black woman which, at the heart of its revelatory story, probes the experiential roots of feminist theology.

Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, (Crossroad, $19.50, 351 pp.) is a richly detailed and carefully argued work of feminist biblical scholarship. Like a detective, the author combs the New Testament texts to chart the experience of women in the movement surrounding Jesus, a reform movement within Judaism that embodied an inclusive vision of the kingdom, female imagery and mythology, and the equal discipleship of women and men. She shows that women exercised equal leadership with men as prophets, apostles, and teachers in the early Christian missionary movement. The gradual accommodation of the early communities to the patriarchal patterns of Greco-Roman society meant a loss of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Christianity's original and radical egalitarianism as it stemmed from the ministry and message of Jesus. The book begins with a sophisticated discussion of feminist theory and method and concludes with a theological perspective on feminist biblical spirituality. *In Memory of Her* is a thoroughly compelling piece of scholarship.

Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Toward a Feminist Theology* (Beacon, $16.95, 285 pp.) carries the feminist theological perspective into the present and future by relating the experience of women to questions of imagery of the divine, the theology of creation, theological anthropology, Christology, Mariology, evil, ministry, and eschatology. Ruether draws upon liberal, romantic, and Marxist feminist interpretations, the dominant Hebrew and Christian traditions, and the minority voices of Canaanite religion, and countercultural forms of Christian thought to propose a systematic feminist theology. Her work is distinguished by its practical, social, and ethical orientation as it suggests ways in which feminist experience impinges on the whole of theological understanding.

Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite's *Metaphors for the Contemporary Church* (Pilgrim, $8.95, 177 pp.) concentrates on ways in which women's experience can help to forge vital images of Christ, the Spirit, and the church. She integrates central themes of Latin American liberation theology with North American feminist thought to offer provocative ways of thinking about the church as a public, political, and ecumenical force in society. Thistlethwaite combines historical and contemporary experience as she searches for inclusive, participatory metaphors that might name the church today. The Body of Christ, the Poor, and the Spirit of Justice are central in this clear, readable essay which is directed primarily toward North American Protestant churches but offers valuable insight on Catholic issues of hierarchy and authority as well.

Alice Walker's superb novel *The Color Purple* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $11.95, 245 pp.) creates the world of a poor black woman as she comes to awareness of herself, those she loves, and the meaning of God in her own experience. It is a story of growing consciousness and authentic personal liberation in one woman's search for justice and love in a situation of misery and injustice. Like the stories of Flannery O'Connor, the art of Alice Walker does not simply have theological implications: its breathtaking symbolism is that primary theology out of which reflection is born. If one wonders how the experience of women, or the poor, is significant for theological reflection, *The Color Purple* is a good place to begin.

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Stanley Hauerwas

STANLEY HAUERWAS *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame. His most recent book is* The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics *(U. of Notre Dame Press).*

I DID NOT TRY to determine a principle of selection as I collected the books I have liked over the last few years. I was, therefore, surprised to discover as I gathered them to write this review that they had a common characteristic — they were books that made me hopeful because of their religious and theological integrity. They uncompromisingly depict the injustice and terror that grips our lives, yet from such honesty I draw hope as it makes me think that theology may not be as silly an enterprise as it often seems.

Vincent Harding's, *There Is a River* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $19.95, 416 pp.) makes chilling reading as one wonders just how much injustice one people can stand. Yet his locating the constant stream of protest, of the ingenuity of survival schooled by black religion, cannot but help give one hope. Dale Aukerman's *Darkening Valley: A Biblical Perspective on Nuclear War* (Seabury, $8.95, 228 pp.) is perhaps even more chilling. Aukerman does not try to "solve" the problem of nuclear war, but rather by drawing on Scripture tries to help us understand why we seem so determined by our own creation. His

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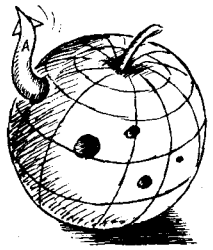
unrelenting depiction of how our sinfulness sustains our intention to murder in the name of a good cause makes hard reading. Yet the book gives one hope



exactly because Aukerman refuses to be comforted by any false solutions that derive from our denial of God's peace.

In his *A Matter of Hope: A Theologian's Reflections on the Thought of Karl Marx* (University of Notre Dame Press, $19.95, 312 pp.) Nicholas Lash, through a critical assessment of Marx, teaches us that hope cannot be less than material for being hope in God. Lash's book is important not only because it is such a fine study of Marx, but because Lash's theological judgments are so sure. The same kind of theological integrity is present in Rowan Williams's *Resurrection* (Darton, Longman, and Todd, $4.75, 129 pp.). Williams's conviction that theology cannot be separated from spirituality is here powerfully exhibited as his book is at once exegetically and existentially compelling. In Williams's account the tragedy of the crucifixion is not denied by the resurrection, but rather he shows how the hope sponsored by the resurrection must embrace that tragic event. Aukerman and Williams read together would make an excellent exercise for Lent.

The last book I mention is not strictly a religious book, but I think it deserves wide readership by all concerned with matters moral. Shirley Letwin's *The Gentleman in Trollope: Individuality and Moral Conduct* (Harvard University Press, $20, 303 pp.) is not only a marvelous study of Trollope, but a wise book about integrity in a world where integrity is not only no longer honored but a hindrance to advancement. Even better, of course, than reading Letwin is reading Trollope who saw clearly our failings but who remained hopeful believing that forgiveness can make a difference in human affairs.

J.M. Cameron

J.M. CAMERON *was for some years the British correspondent of* Commonweal. *In England he was professor of philosophy at the University of Leeds and then Master of Rutherford College in the University of Kent at Canterbury. He left England for Canada in 1971 and is now an emeritus professor of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto. His most recent book is* On the Idea of a University *(U. of Toronto Press).*

I DON'T go out of my way to read new religious books. The Abbé Huvelin told von Hügel that he ought not to read the religious press on the ground that it would do him a great deal of harm. I find that many works bearing on Christian theology and morals get my bile flowing to excess and I therefore tend to keep away from them. Sometimes they come to me in the way of duty — I am asked to review them or to comment on them. Of these an outstanding book *seems to me Jonathan Bishop's The Covenant: A Reading* (Templegate, $9.95 paper, 458 pp.). It is a strong work and an original one, though it isn't original in the pejorative sense (it isn't obvious that originality is to be welcomed in a work of theology). It is full of perplexities and rough passages that make us sigh and go back to the beginning; but this is welcome after the predigested stuff so common in religious literature.

An older book I came across and read on Alasdair MacIntyre's recommendation is *Natural Law and Natural Rights* by John Finnis (Clarendon/Oxford, $49.95, $14.95 paper, 442 pp. paperback). This blows the dust off some old topics and makes us think again. It was published in 1980 but I read it only in the past year, so I hope it may be included in my list. Those interested in the topic of abortion may remember Finnis's brilliant reply to a paper by Judith Jarvis Thomson, in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* in 1973.

Finally, I have to include in my list *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, $1.50, 116 pp.), the statement of the American bishops on the prospect of nuclear war. I myself thought their second draft was a stronger document; but despite all the pressures to which they were subjected by the administration and by conservative Catholics they didn't swerve from their apostolic responsibility as pastors and teachers. American Catholics have reason to be proud of their bishops and the whole Christian world owes them a debt. Those who prefer an episcopate of dogs that don't bark, or paper tigers, or simple patriots in the style of the American Legion's spokesmen, have been rattled, and

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some of the more guileless victims of the paranoid fantasies of the Right are genuinely puzzled. There is of course a systematic attempt to suggest that in all this they are not really the pope's men (John Paul II is not unjustly accused, as were John XXIII and Paul VI, of being a tool of the Communists). I wonder if those who make these suggestions have noted the recent advice of the pope to scientists engaged in research on weapons: to get out of this field and do something else.

Monika K. Hellwig

MONIKA K. HELLWIG *is professor of theology at Georgetown University. She is the author of* Jesus the Compassion of God *(Michael Glazier).*

THE QUESTION about my favorite religious books of 1983 took me by surprise. Examining my conscience about the books that really trapped me, the books I read guiltily through the night and into the early morning hours, I find that these are from other years and for the most part from other centuries and not so explicitly religious — books of Chesterton, Conan Doyle, Dickens, Shakespeare, folk tales and mythology. I may as well admit it; my favorite reading in 1983 did not consist of the edifying religious publications of that year.

But there was one exception: *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $15.95, 502 pp.). How does one begin to describe the medieval charm, wit, passion, and intrigue of this book in its excellent translation by William Weaver? Certainly it has the attraction of intellectual snobbery, but so do Karl Rahner and Schillebeeckx and Paul Ricoeur, but I have never stayed awake all night to read any of them. It is a murder mystery whose plot moves slowly through five hundred pages. But the characterizations are magnificent and the wisdom paradoxical and profound. And is it really a religious book? I think it is such in a style that suits our times.

There are two books that I read in the daytime, most soberly, because the publisher asked me to — in itself an inauspicious circumstance. yet these two I truly enjoyed. They were Bernard Cooke's *Sacraments and Sacramentality* (Twenty-Third Publications, $12.95, 251 pp.) and Gerard Sloyan's *Jesus in Focus* (same publisher, $12.95, 212 pp.). I do not really think that either of these authors wrote with people like me in mind, people who are already gagging on a surfeit of theology and piety. However, I found in both books a degree of honesty that engaged me in refreshing mental conversation. It is not only that I like to know the new thoughts of old friends, but it is also that both books address issues that are never out of date: the true meaning of Jesus in the real context of his life (the Jewish context in this case), and the true meaning of our sacramental worship in the real context of our lives.

Similarly helpful in its radical honesty I found Henri Nouwen's *Gracias! A Latin American Journal* (Harper & Row, $12.95, 188 pp.), which a friend pressed upon me unsolicited. It is not a book to read straight through. I have been reading it at the dentist and in the cashier's line at the grocery store and have found it a good bedside book, because each entry has some gem of insight, compassion, wisdom.

Leonard Swidler

LEONARD SWIDLER *is Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University. He is co-founder and editor of the* Journal of Ecumenical Studies.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS ago Christians attacked each other with regularity and gleeful abandon; seventy-five years ago dialogue among Protestants was initiated; twenty years ago Roman Catholics joined the intra-Christian dialogue and proclaimed themselves in favor of dialogue with all believers and non-believers. Vatican II and the ensuing years saw an outpouring of intra-Christian dialogue and the beginnings of Jewish-Christian dialogue; the path of the wider dialogue was trod only by a few. Today, however, the "turn toward the other" dialogue is beginning to bear its full fruit in a harvest of books focusing on interreligious dialogue. The following is merely a sampling of some of my most recent favorites.

Jesus in Focus by Gerard S. Sloyan (Twenty-third Publications, 212 pp., $7.95) is a presentation of Jesus as he is depicted by each of the Gospel writers and by Paul. It is the pure distillation of a lifetime of penetrating scholarship, unburdened by heavy scholarly apparatus. All through the book the author engages in constant dialogue with Judaism, Islam, and perhaps most of all with modern critical thinking. Moreover, it's a joy to read — like sipping from a clear, cool

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drink — but be careful, it's really spiritual and intellectual nitro.

Die Bergpredigt – Utopie oder Programm? (The Sermon on the Mount — Utopia or Program?) by Pinchas Lapide (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 12DM, 144 pp.) has already gone through several printings and two editions, and will be published later this year in English by Orbis Books. The Jewish author draws upon his deep Jewish scholarly knowledge and his penetrating New Testament scholarship to present convincingly the "pacifist" teachings of Jesus in a way that makes practical sense in today's nuclear-power world. The Sermon on the Mount is not idealistic eschatology, but a practical, doable program of peace-making for today.

Buddhism and Christianity – Their Inner Affinity by Antony Fernando (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Ecumenical Institute, 490 Havelock Rd., $5, 133 pp.) has also gone through several printings and is into a second edition; it likewise will be brought out in an expanded edition by Orbis Books in 1984. Buddhism had always seemed life-denying to me before, but here from the scholarly hand of a Sri Lankan Buddhist-Catholic the teachings of Gautama come alive. They are systematically compared with the teachings of Jesus (and also the Rabbis in the forthcoming edition), and the same message is found: liberation for authentic life.

Marianne Sawicki

MARIANNE SAWICKI *is director of the M.A. program in religious education at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.*

CALL it perverse, but this year I took particular delight in books that upset the theological applecart, in one way or another.

There's a radical challenge to the conventional craft of Christian theology in Edward Farley's *Ecclesial Reflection* (Fortress, $29.95, 399 pp.), subtitled "An Anatomy of Theological Method." This book, the second of two philosophically agile though dense volumes, discredits the custom of supporting a dogma by appealing to Scripture or to institutional authorities within the church. Scripture and other loci of authority are, to the discerning eye, vehicles that promote the ecclesial community's social endurance through history; no modern mind can unequivocally say they are more. Stop citing them, Farley tells theologians, and start investigating the very real evidence offered by ecclesial intersubjectivity, that is, by the distinctive redemptive mode of human being-together that is dynamically inaugurated day by day by the Gospel's healing of our meanings for one another. This disconcerting advice has stirred things up on several fronts within the theological establishment. Hackles were raised at last summer's meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association, which in plenary session collectively scowled at Farley's conclu-

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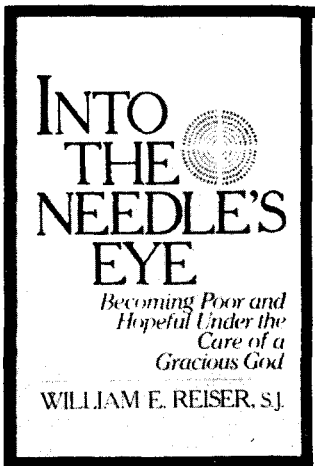

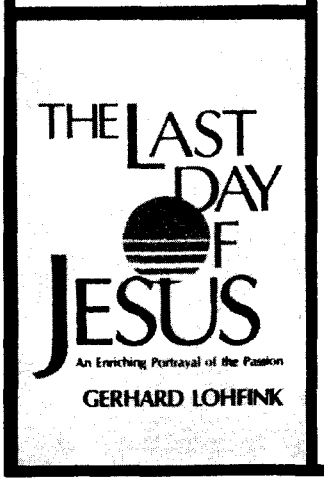

INTO THE NEEDLE'S EYE
William E. Reiser, S.J.
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sions while admitting the importance of his questions. Far from idolizing the church, Farley bows to the divine creative influence that begets the miracle of human love as divinity's most reliable witness.

Also delightful is Bernard Cooke's *Sacraments & Sacramentality* (Twenty-Third Publications, $7.95, 254 pp.), which takes marriage as its point of departure — not Baptism or Eucharist, as is customary. The first sacramental grace one experiences is that of marriage, embodied in one's parents' loving care even before Baptism. For Cooke, the Eucharist itself is rooted in the two primary gestures of family love: the giving of food and the giving of the body. Using what is the stuff of everyday life for most Christians, Cooke has opened up new vistas of theological understanding and religious appreciation.

Something which theologians habitually overlook is brought to the fore in Michael Warren's *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics* (Saint Mary's Press, $15.95, 493 pp.), i.e., that the great teaching tradition of the church goes forward principally through the efforts of ordinary folks engaged in catechizing the next generation. The essays and historical documents assembled by Warren show the influence of the catechetical movement upon the Second Vatican Council, for example, and they give invaluable background for understanding phenomena such as the Baltimore Catechism and the CCD. One Hispanic staff member in Los Angeles' archdiocesan religious education office (where the prevailing theological winds can at times be somewhat clerical, Anglo, and male) found in Warren's book an eye-opening revelation: CCD was founded in this archdiocese in 1922 expressly to work among Mexican immigrants — and it was founded through the efforts of a lay woman.

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Cornel West

CORNEL WEST *teaches philosophy at Union Theological Seminary and is the author of* Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity *(Westminister).*

SINCE most of my reading of religious books consists of those published decades ago, it is a bit difficult to remember noteworthy texts published this past year. And I must admit that Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, $15.95, 252 pp.) and Jeffrey Stout's *The Flight From Authority: Religion, Morality and the Quest for Autonomy* (Notre Dame, $25, 307 pp.), though three years old, still resound loudly in my mind.

Matthew Lamb's *Solidarity With Victims: Toward A Theology of Social Transformation* (Crossroad, $12.95, 158 pp.) is a superb theological contribution toward the making of a Christian *Praxisweltanschauung*. Lamb's detailed knowledge of critical theory and impressive grounding in Lonergan's prophetic Catholic theology greatly enhance the philosophical quality of discourse among liberation theologians. His sympathetic though incisive critique of disclosive models of truth and his own transformative conception of truth presents new possibilities for Christian thinkers. And his program of political theological hermeneutics — a contemporary praxis enlightenment project — is a breath of fresh air in these days of pervasive resignation and cynicism for the epochal transition which we are now undergoing.

James Bentley's *Between Marx and Christ: The Dialogue in German-Speaking Europe 1870-1970* (Verso, $7.50, 191 pp.) is a useful account of the rich tradition of conversation and alliance between Christians and Marxists

in German-speaking parts of Europe. Bentley's historical treatments of a number of key figures — the first Christian socialist party member Christoph Blumhardt, the Marxist historian of Christianity Karl Kautsky, the Czech theologians Josef Hromadka and Jan Milic Lochman, the persistently courageous Dorothea Sölle and the perennially provocative Jurgen Moltmann — provide a source of information and inspiration for those of us who think some version of the conversation and alliance is worth pursuing.

Philip S. Foner's volume, *Black Socialist Preacher* (Synthesis, $8.95, 363 pp.) is a welcome and valuable collection of the writings and speeches of Rev. George Washington Woodbey, his protégé Rev. George W. Slater, Jr., Rt. Rev. James Theodore Holly, and Rev. R.C. Ransom. This book not only unearths the socialist tradition in the black church, thereby broadening our knowledge of the complexity and diversity of ideological perspectives among Afro-American Christians; it also deepens our understanding of the scope of the religious prophetic tradition in the U.S.A.

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Dolores Leckey

DOLORES LECKEY *is director of the Committee on the Laity, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, a featured columnist for NC News and the author of* The Ordinary Way *(Crossroad).*

IN CHOOSING three religious books to recommend to *Commonweal* readers, I asked several questions. What recent works have spoken of God in a fresh language? What has illuminated meaning for me in the ordinary blessed routines of daily love and work, of children and friendship, of sickness, death, and loss? Of willingness and hope?

My choices, while different in form, share a common substantive grounding, namely that art has the capacity to break open the great themes of Christian faith in such a way that they concretely live in *our* time, in *our* place, in *our* relationships.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (Washington Square Press, publication of Pocketbooks Division, Simon and Schuster, $5.95, 253 pp.) while not catalogued as a religious book — it received last year's Pulitzer Prize for fiction — is rich with spiritual images. Impotence and despair, cruelty, forgiveness and reconciliation, and most of all empowering, freeing love are all there. And not a religious cliché in sight.

Set in the South between the two World Wars, *The Color Purple* is a story about black women, mostly, but black men, too. At its heart, however, it tells pieces of the secret story of all of us. Alice Walker is *doing* the theology of story.

If religious sensibility and theology are embedded in Alice Walker's fiction, Herwig Art, S.J., illustrates his theology with the insights of other disciplines, including poetry and the social sciences.

With Your Whole Soul, subtitled *On the Christian Experience of God,* by Herwig Arts, S.J., (translated by Sr. Helen Rolfson, O.S.F., Paulist Press, $7.95, 203 pp.) explores the question of whether or not there is an essential difference between the Christian experience of God and the way in which the other great religious traditions experience the transcendent. Arts locates the uniqueness of the Christian experience of God in relationships. Interdependence is at the core of Arts's work, as it is in Walker's. "While God gives me my being," he writes, "I express outwardly what I have become through others." His respect for and use of the intuitive, imaginative path create for me a credible theology. *With Your Whole Soul* is itself a work of interdependence.

Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art by Madeleine L'Engle (Bantam, $2.95, 198 pp.) is a book for the bedside or the long plane ride. L'Engle ruminates about her dearest treasures: her family, the Christian faith, music, her work, and the natural world.Gently, this small journal invites us to pause and notice our relationship to everything, and to create our own metaphors. This is the stuff of meditation.

I look forward to more voices like these, voices that respectfully dispel my illusions.

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MY ANGEL WILL GO BEFORE YOU

by Georges Huber

Translated from the French

"My surprise grew as I read the book. It is indeed worthy of the angels; and it can face criticism from any angle.

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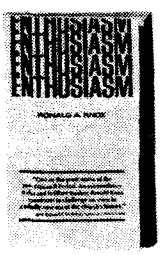

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Martin E. Marty

MARTIN E. MARTY *is Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Modern Christianity at the University of Chicago Divinity School, associate editor of the* Christian Century, *and author of the forthcoming* Pilgrims in Their Own Land (Little Brown).

LOOK ELSEWHERE than here for excitements of the moment. I will choose several books from my own discipline, religious history. Earliest to appear is last February's *The First Urban Christians* by Wayne A. Meeks (Yale University Press, $19.95, 299 pp.). Never elsewhere have I learned so much so quickly about the early Christians. Who joined the movement? Why? Why so many women? What class were they? Meeks slights theology, but he says he does, so that's fair.

The most recent to appear, in fact it is not yet published as I write, is Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma* (University of Chicago Press, $27.50, 488 pp.) This is Volume 4 in Pelikan's *The Christian Tradition*, a series for which they must have coined words like "magisterial." Watch for Pelikan finding surprising diversity in late medieval thought. The Reformation has been his home turf for a third of a century and more. Walk confidently with him.

Mark A. Noll and what looks like a cast of thousands edited Eerdmans' *Handbook to Christianity in America* (Eerdmans, $24.95, 507 pp). Is it cricket on this one, since I contributed all of two pages to it? So did everyone else. The editors come from the camp called Neo-evangelical. Yet they've spread their stakes far, and Catholic traditions receive fair treatment. Maps, charts, snippets, pictures, short articles make up the book. Go elsewhere for sustained theses; go here for quick glimpses and ready reference.

Oh, let me sneak in along with that two volumes edited by Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in America* (Eerdmans, $18.95 each; 535, 610 pp.) Here you get a feel for sources from the American past. There are good bibliographies. Let's call it basic, enduring.

Finally, (and lest you think I am on the take with Eerdmans, who published 50 percent of my choices,) let me point to Theodore Caplow, Howard M. Bahr, and Bruce A. Chadwick, *All Faithful People: Change and Continuity in Middletown's Religion* (University of Minnesota, $19.50, 378 pp.) The editors found far more religion in "Middletown" decades after earlier samples. Their findings raise problems for those who use simple secularization theories.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 100)

Perhaps Ahern finds Eco too good for the likes of the novel's quarter million readers, on whom the church Latin is largely wasted?

I can assure Ahern, and the readers of *Commonweal*, that the three presses that have published Eco's other books would be grateful to pick up a small portion of that readership for his scholarly studies. In the meantime, they are doing the best they can for their author.

RICHARD KOFFLER
Executive Director, The Association of University Presses, Inc.

Moral meandering

Keyport, N.J.

To the Editors: I share Bryan Hehir's concern for building a barrier against future interventions in the style of the Grenada invasion. In reading his article [Dec. 16] I was hoping to see some application for the *jus ad bellum* criteria to this — unhappy to say — not most recent U.S. resort to arms. Of course I was disappointed — it was not there! But then again I have always only encountered it in some dark corner of labyrinthine Catholic moral meandering about laws and mores in the service of putting a human face on anti-human thoughts, words, actions. The Just/Unjust War ethic died long before the Age of Trinity but the stench of its congenital failure continues to pollute our moral imagination and courage. (REV.) RONALD CIOFFI

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The Company at Kirkridge, a supportive network for contemporary Christians, will meet March 23,24,25,1984 at Mt. Saviour monastery Elmira, N.Y. Sidney Callahan will speak on Self-Awareness, Empowerment For Political Action? Join us and become part of an ongoing group which is ecumenical in every dimension. For information write Anthony Ciccariello, 520 W. Gray St., Elmira, N.Y. 14905.

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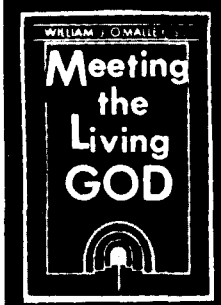

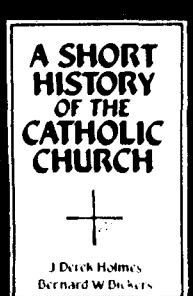

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On Cardinal O'Connell of Boston...

If the Merry del Val connection would tend to have Pope Benedict keep the Archbishop of Boston at a certain distance, that distance was lengthened when the latter's nephew, James O'Connell, chancellor of the archdiocese, left the priesthood, married and took a substantial sum of archdiocesan funds at his departure. In an audience shortly after World War I, Benedict XV confronted O'Connell with the story, the cardinal denied it, whereupon the pontiff reached into his desk and took out a copy of the marriage license from Crown Point, Indiana, handed it to O'Connell, and the latter dropped to his knees and begged for mercy. (p. 72-73)

On Archbishop Curley of Baltimore...

As I had reason to know, Archbishop Curley suffered the 'slings and arrows' of ill fortune that befall most of humankind, and one time when we were discussing the career of a certain disappointed churchman, he suddenly exclaimed, "Rome will use you, abuse you, and then throw you away!" (p. 52)

On Cardinal Spellman of New York...

I have frequently heard Spellman dismissed as an ambitious careerist, Rome's errand boy, as it were, a mediocrity who through cultivating powerful people had risen far beyond his true merits....Yet beneath the commonplace exterior there were qualities of a superior order, for example, high administrative talent, shrewdness to a marked degree, sharp intelligence in practical matters, all of which were employed in a dedication to the Church that was never in question. (p. 94-95)

On Archbishop Vagnozzi, Apostolic Delegate to the U.S....

Archbishop Cardinale told me that in the time that Vagnozzi served as auditor of the Paris nunciature when the then Archbishop Angelo Roncalli was nuncio, the auditor would be heard to say to the nuncio on occasion, "You don't know what you are talking about." Yet it was the same Roncalli who as John XXIII appointed Vagnozzi, then Nuncio to the Philippines, to the Delegation in Washington. When I confessed that I found it difficult to understand, Cardinale remarked, "It was Pope John's policy to be kind to his enemies." (p. 145)

On Archbishop Hallinan of Atlanta...

If I have headed my remarks about the late Archbishop of Atlanta *'facile princeps,'* it is because I regard him as the most striking example of episcopal leadership in the American Catholic community of my time. (p. 174)

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